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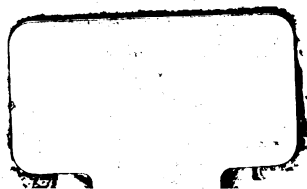
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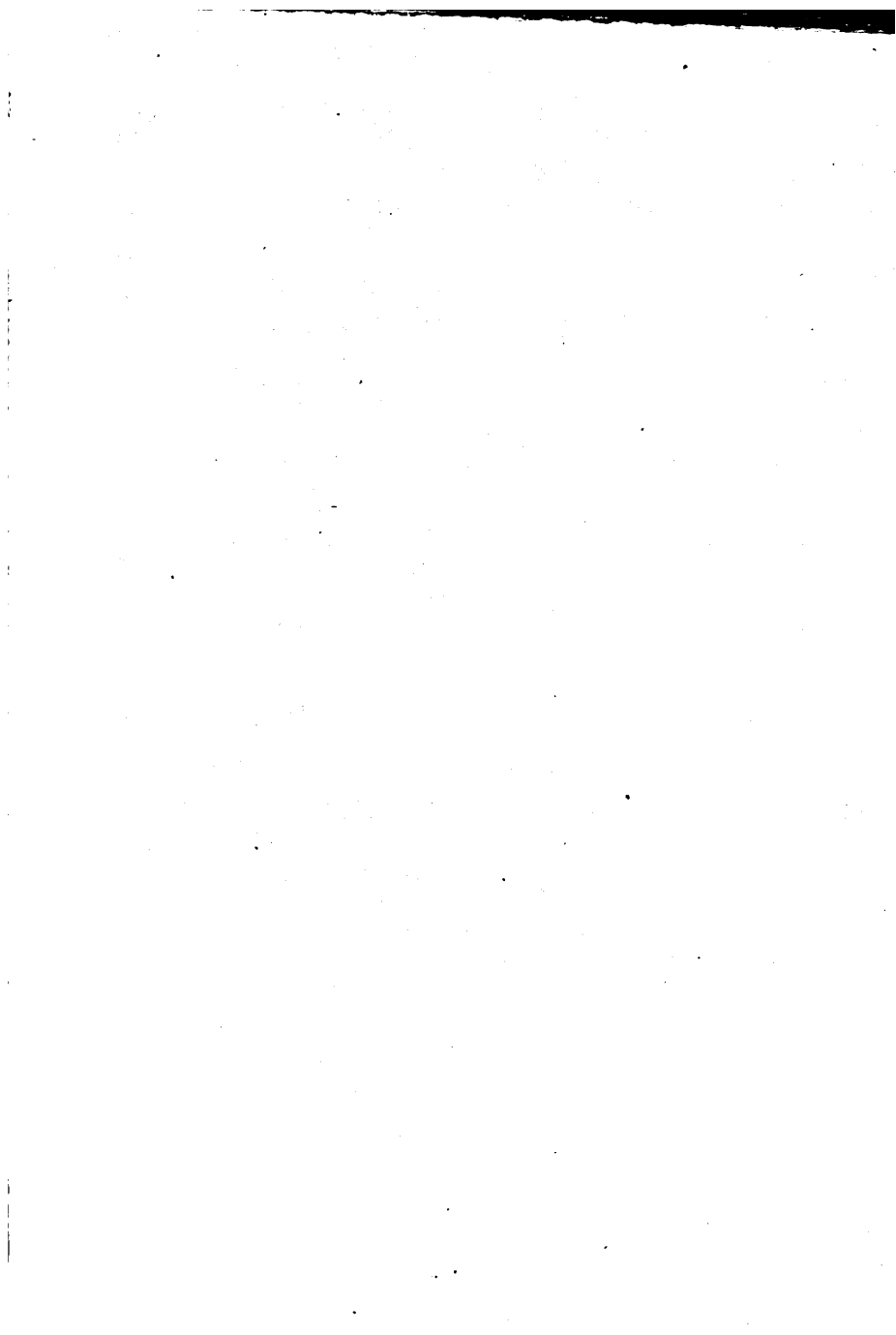
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JEANNETTE









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JEANNETTE.

VOL. II

JEANNETTE

BY

MARY C. ROWSELL

AUTHOR OF

"LOVE LOYAL," "ST. NICOLAS' EVE,"
&c., &c.

"I could not love thee, dear, so much,
Loved I not honour more."

RICHARD LOVELACE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



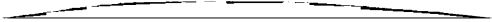
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JEANNETTE.

CHAPTER I.

UNDER THE LAMPLIGHT.

“**A**ND what time did she get home?”
were Sir Morton’s first words on entering the room some hours later.

“Four o’clock,” answered I, a little bluntly. “And really it was too bad of you, Sir Morton, to leave her to take care of herself in the pouring rain like that, even supposing——”

“Four o’clock !”

"She's gone to bed now; tired out."

"Four o'clock! Why, we parted at two."

"Three, I suppose you mean. Dawdled on the way, of course."

"Indeed no. Arrows couldn't have gone straighter; and I heard it strike three as I stood in Langford's parlour. It was just beginning to pour faster than ever then, and I was so glad she had turned back when she had. I thought she would just be safe under cover by then."

"How far did she go with you?"

"Just beyond the wood."

"You went by the river, then?"

"Of course."

"It is a short mile and a half home here from the wood," mused I, "and she didn't get back till after four."

"Perhaps she went round to see one of her regiment of rheumatic old women."

"In the pouring rain? Do you really think that's how it was?" I asked, trying to read his eyes.

"I can't think of anything else," he replied. "Why didn't you ask her?"

"She didn't seem inclined to talk."

"Poor little one! So tired as that! But only tired, Jeannette?" he said, turning on me with a sudden shade of anxiety overcasting his face. "Only tired, eh?"

"I hope that's all," returned I, still continuing my grave scrutiny. "Did you," I went on, "have any words before you parted?"

"Yes," he said, smiling a little, "one or two—very sweet ones, if you must know, Netta."

"You are very absurd," said I, crossly, "pretending not to know what I mean."

"Upon my honour I do not," he replied, with an air of utter mystification.

"You did not quarrel, then?"

"Really," he said, with a cheery laugh, "you add insult to injury, and when you know, too, how nicely we are qualifying for the Dunmow fitch! What do you mean, Jeannette?" he went on, more seriously, throwing down the newspaper he had taken up.

"You parted friends."

"No, lovers. Netta, Netta," he added, hurriedly, "what is it you mean? Don't keep beating about the bush in this manner. For pity's sake, tell me what did she say?"

"Nothing, Sir Morton."

"That is not true."

"Things so strange, then, that I wouldn't repeat them, if you were to torture me for it."

"But——"

"So inexplicable that I almost think her mind must have been—well, overwrought,

you know. It is so likely, with all that wet and fatigue. She's not as strong as a horse."

"If she should fall ill," he said, sitting down and staring gloomily at me, "through some stupid old woman——"

"She would only have herself to blame, not you," said I, relenting in the distressful perplexity of his face.

But that reflection seemed to bring him scanty consolation.

"I have never dared to face such a thought," he said, in a low, awe-stricken tone, more to himself than me, "as—oh! Netta, tell me what—have you sent for Verity?"

"Nonsense!" I said—"no, I should think not. She needs a night's rest more than a doctor."

"You really think so?" he asked, brightening a little.

"Ay, yes, I'm sure of it. Come yourself as early as you please to-morrow morning for a bulletin of her most capricious Serene Highness."

"Why do you say that?" he demanded. "She is not capricious. I never find her so."

"Then she is not," laughed I. "For what she seems to you that she is, be sure of it."

"You are very oracular to-night," he said, with a puzzled, faint smile, as he turned to go. "Good night, Jeannette." And he strode out into the hall, I following to open the door for him. He paused as he set his foot upon the threshold, and glanced up the staircase. "She is asleep now?" he asked, in a low, hushed tone.

"No doubt," replied I, in the same whisper.

"Take care of her, Netta, for my sake," he murmured, earnestly, bending low to my ear.

"And for my own sake I shall. You always forget me," I said, looking up, with a smile.

"Am I likely ever to do that?" challenged he, with the bright, frank look in his eyes shining on me through the darkness visible, created by the tiny hanging lamp over our heads. And then I noiselessly closed the door—whose bolts he had yielded so carefully into my hands, in order to avoid all possibility of click or scrape—upon the man who was light and life to me, and who held me worthy of just a trifle more consideration than one bestows on the honest watch-dog who guards some inestimable treasure.

Standing where he had left me, I listened to the echo of his footsteps, till the very faintest of them died in the distance; and then turned to the dining-room door again, but changed my mind, deciding that first I

would go up to Lina's room, and see whether she had really fallen asleep.

As I set foot on the lower stairs, I ask myself whether anything is wrong with my eyes? or do I see some flash of white, and a pale ghost-like face peering over at me through the semi-darkness? No, no, not fancy at all; for reaching the angle of the stairs, I find myself face to face with Isoline, all her golden hair unbound and straying loose over the white morning wrapper, flung about her shoulders, and a stare so fixed, and searching, and stony in her dilated eyes, that, be the words what they may, it is an intense relief when she speaks.

"That was Sir Morton!" she says, pointing the forefinger of her uplifted right hand at me, with a strange intentness, as though she were taxing me with some forbidden act.

"Yes, I know," I reply, in tones as steady

and matter-of-fact as I can command, for the unexpected sight of her has startled me. "And what do you do here out on the cold landing? Barefooted, too!" I cry, catching a glimpse of her little white feet, peeping, as the gallant poet has it, "like little mice," beneath her trailing night-gear. "Do you want to kill yourself quite?"

A low, mocking laugh, that died away into a grievous moan, was all her answer.

"Couldn't you," I continued, gently taking her by the arm, and leading her back to her bed—"couldn't you trust me to tell Sir Morton about you? Supposing he had seen you, what——"

"Oh!" interrupted she, with a slight flush, "do you think I wasn't careful he shouldn't do that? I am more careful than you are, Netta. Let me tell you that." And another little discordant laugh escaped her.

"We thought you were fast asleep."

"Oh! you did, did you," she said, with a strange, sarcastic petulance. "And you think, too, I am to be treated like a child."

"If you behave like one, certainly. Come," I added, covering her up warmly, as she laid herself down again, "there, at all events, you're a good, obedient one now; but you ought not to have done this. It is not summer now, remember. There, go to sleep. And Sir Morton is coming again early to-morrow morning."

"I know. I heard him promise—you."

"And if you are not up and ready——"

"You will be, won't you?" she said, gravely.

"What sort of consolation will that be to him, I wonder?" said I, with an involuntary flush of pain, and yet of some amusement too, as I took up her candlestick. "I'm going to leave you in the dark now. To

make sure, you know, of there being no more escapades."

"How handsome you are, Netta," she murmured, her eyes following my every movement.

"Have you just found that out?" I asked, banteringly.

"Perhaps. That is, I begin to understand how he—he— I am just what people call 'pretty.' How I do hate that word. That's all I am, eh, Netta?"

"My dear, don't let's begin instituting comparisons to-night. Go to sleep."

"I am only pretty, am I?" she insisted.

"You vain child! Ask Sir Morton what he thinks."

"Oh, I know what he thinks—now."

"You do. That's well then. Good night. Sweet dreams."

"Those are for you, Netta," she said, turning her head away, and closing her

eyes with a weary sigh. I waited a second or two to see whether she stirred again, but all was still, and I left her.

CHAPTER II.

“WHEN WE TWO PARTED.”

“GOOD morning to your night-cap,” said Lina, when I entered the room next morning, meeting my surprised look at finding her down, and intent on her coffee-pot.

“Up and dressed?”

“Clothed,” replied she, with what I fancied was rather forced gaiety, “and in my right mind. I do believe you thought I wasn’t last night.”

“Well, since you admit the charge——”

“Oh! but I don’t. Never mind. What

were you going to say?" she asked, handing me my cup, but avoiding my eyes, not quickly enough, however, to hide the pale wanness of her face from me. "Anything important?"

"Well, only that I am burning with curiosity to know where you got to in the rain yesterday afternoon."

"Where—I—got—to?" she said, with the slow deliberation of one who seeks for time to collect ideas.

"Yes. Sir Morton said you and he parted just beyond the gate of St. Grimwold's wood."

She nodded.

"And then, what did you do?"

"Turned back."

"Well, by the road, of course?"

"No. Through the wood."

"How foolish of you! Why did you do it?"

"It's shorter; and, besides——"

"And besides what?"

"Nothing. Will you have another cup?"

"Yes. Besides, what did you do such a stupid thing for?" insisted I.

"You'd have done the same, I think, Netta."

"There must have been a wild beast there, or a madman in the path."

"Ah!" laughed she, uneasily; "not quite so bad as that."

"The place is like a sponge in wet weather."

"One may prefer Charybdis to Scylla."

"You are too classical for me," laughed I. "What, who might be your Scylla?"

"Lady Havering."

"Lady Havering?"

"Why do you start and stare in that melodramatic fashion? It was a very simple affair. Just as I turned back

at the gate I saw the great thing——”

“Her ladyship?”

“No, her ladyship’s carriage, lumbering along towards me, and I took fright, like the coward I am, and dived down into the wood, out of her way.”

“That was wise of you, at any rate.”

“I think it was very cowardly—now.”

“Indeed! I would not have had you meet her for a thousand pounds.”

“Why not?”

“She might have made herself intensely disagreeable.”

Lina smiled drearily.

“How feelingly you speak—from experience, one would almost think.”

“So I do,” boldly returned I. “Have I not the honour of a speaking acquaintance with her? *Had* I not, I should say of course. You put a merciful end to all that, didn’t you, Lina?”

"I think you are rather hard upon her, Netta," said Lina. "She may seem cold and stern, but I do believe she wishes us well, after all."

"I hope so—you, Lina, especially."

"I think you're her favourite, Netta."

γ "Then how she must hate you, child!"

"No, no, don't say that. You are mistaken indeed."

"So much the better. All the same, I tell you, I'm glad you did not encounter her tender mercies."

"What a poor, weak scrap you do think me!" sighed she. "Well, perhaps I am."

"No, but——"

"Even supposing I had spoken with her——"

"I tell you I wouldn't have had it for a king's ransom. But all's well that ends well. And so you took shelter in the cave?"

"Yes, we——"

"We!"

"Scamp and I," she said, quietly.

"Ah! you always do talk of that dog as if he were a Christian."

"He's worth a dozen of them," she said, filling his matutinal milk-saucer, and setting it on the floor.

"Granted, for the sake of argument; and so we took shelter in the cave, did we? That wasn't cheerful."

She shivered.

"N—no. But not for long; it was soon over."

"The rain?"

"Oh, yes, the rain. What a splendid chief inquisitor you would make, Netta!"

"My dear, I only want to account for things."

"What things?"

"Why, your being so wet; because, if you stood up, and had an umbrella——"

"But then, you see, I came out of the cave again as soon as ever I could, when the downpour ceased a little, and then I made a run for the road; but I hadn't got farther than the ruins, when it began worse than ever, and I had to stand up again."

"Not much shelter there," I said. "The place hasn't an inch of roof, except the bell-fry, and——"

"That's just where we went."

"Then thank heaven you're alive, Lina! Don't you know it isn't safe, that priest's tower?"

"No. Who told you that?"

"Sir Morton was only saying to me the other day that he was having a gigantic 'Dangerous' board painted to put up on it."

"He said that to you, Netta?"

"Yes, indeed he did."

"He always does say everything to you," she said, speculatively.

"You jealous little puss!"

"No, no!"

"A piece of practical prose about a wooden board."

"That's just it; he talks the sense to you, and the nonsense to me."

"No, the poetry—the sentiment, my dear."

"That's the same thing—the nonsense to me. It's you he makes his companion, Netta."

"And you his wife."

"They should be convertible terms," she replied. "If a man feels they are not so," she went on, "in the woman he—fancies he loves, let him be merciful before it is too late. Are we to have those veal cutlets for dinner, you were talking about? What are you laughing at?" she asked, gravely.

"My darling, at your descent from the sublime——"

"I said nothing sublime; it was only common truth."

"To the ridiculous."

"And veal's not ridiculous," she went on, with a faint smile.

"By no means," said I, still hugely amused. "What to have for dinner is a very weighty matter, of course, and a great worry every day. Do you know, I've been thinking it's high time you were relieved of it. I've come to the conclusion that the future mistress of Havering Court oughtn't to go catering in behalf of our humble establishment for soap and suet, and the rest of it. Everybody in his place, and it's time you handed that department over to me."

"No, no," she said, with an odd, cheerless smile.

“But——”

“No, look here: that is just the very reason why—— Wait a little first, Netta, it will come all right, and—is it to be cutlets? Do make haste now—say.”

I nodded assent.

“And you make haste too, or Sir Morton will be here before you are back.”

Already she is half way across the lawn, and I sit on, where she has left me, with my chin in my hand and my elbows planted on the yet uncleared breakfast-table, puzzling over the odd and, for her, unnatural mixture of composure and nervous excitement in her manner. To me she seems like some clever actress who struggles with very imperfect success to render a part which is unsympathetic to her. The calm, even joyousness of her temperament seems all merged into some artificial channel, and over her sweet, womanly, reposeful, almost.

languorous dignity, has fallen a harsh restlessness, tainted with something which is almost like cunning, or at least wariness—of me, at all events. What could have possessed her to play the spy upon her lover and me last night as she did? Even had she come to guess the secret my soul guarded—which heaven forefend!—is honour only a name? And Sir Morton, would he have lived as he did in my heart's highest estate, had I thought that that love he had asked of her and won, was not, once given, returned tenfold? If her calm acceptance of his devotion now and again irritated me, this new caprice seriously angered me against her. It might be well enough to indulge in coquetries and caprices with some men, but with Sir Morton Havering—no.

As I anticipate, Isoline has not been gone ten minutes before Sir Morton makes his appearance. Any vexation and even aston-

ishment he may feel at finding her out, is covered by the satisfaction he expresses at her being so entirely recovered. And, taking up a luxurious seat near the fire, he sits for nearly half an hour, a model of patience, quietly cutting and dipping into the pages of the last *Quarterly*, which he has brought with him. But suddenly it is exhausted, and, flinging the erudite periodical on the table, he announces his intention of going in search of her, and strides out through the gate.

In something less than an hour he comes back—alone.

“Not found her?” I ask.

“Oh, yes,” he replies, in a tone whose attempt at carelessness only renders the mortification he feels more apparent. “There she was, reading a tract, or something of the sort, in old Granny Gitten’s cottage.”

And then, for the first time in my life, I hear an expletive more forcible than becoming break from Sir Morton's lips.

"Said she'd come presently," he added.

"And here she is," I say, pointing to where, with slow step, she comes up the garden-path, "and looking anything but the better for yesterday. How pale she is, to be sure!"

"It was too bad of you, Isoline," he says, his eyes growing magically bright as he opens the door, and holds out both hands to her, which she does not, or affects not to see. "One would think that old woman was more to you than I am."

She made no reply.

"Lina!" I say, reproachfully.

"Don't be vexed," she says then, lifting her eyes to his.

"Not vexed?" he cries, passionately, "when you must have known how I want-

ed to see whether the roses that the rain washed away yesterday have come back."

"One would think, to hear you talk, that I painted," she said, petulantly, and edging round the table beyond his reach.

"Lina!" he cries, with a world of bewilderment in his eyes.

"Yes, Sir Morton," she says, setting down her little basket, and leisurely drawing off her gloves.

"Come here, Miss Latour." He laughs uneasily. With slow, measured step she obeys him; but the next instant he is beside her, holding her in his arms. "My darling!" he murmurs, bending over her, and, gathering her closer and closer to him, draws her head down upon his breast. For one moment she lets it rest there, a smile of unutterable content lighting the pale, set face, and so, with the two hands she has clasped about his neck, she brings his forehead

down lower, lower, until the quivering lips are pressed against it in one long, yearning kiss. Then the warm flush dies out from her face, the fixed, inscrutable dulness, almost like the glaze of death itself, gathers again over the clear, star-like eyes, and gently, but firmly untwining the arms that clasp her, with never a word, never another look, crosses to the door, and is gone.

CHAPTER III.

"MUTE MUSIC."

SIR MORTON glanced from the closing door to me. Did that look in his eyes seek re-assurance from mine? If it did, they had none to give him. Lina's behaviour was at least as unintelligible to me as to him. I could only begin to think that the previous day's misadventure had disordered her sensitive frame seriously; and took refuge, in the perplexing silence that ensued, in expressing an opinion that there would be no harm in asking Dr. Verity to look in and see her.

"I will go for him," said Sir Morton, finding relief, I fancy, in doing something; and soon they came back together.

Contrary to my anticipation, Lina made no demurring to Dr. Verity's visit. She seemed almost to desire it.

"And there is nothing the matter?" she said, with an odd smile upon her lips, as he rose to take his leave. "I am none the worse for yesterday, am I?"

"You are none the better, Miss Lina," said the doctor, with a puzzled air.

"Nonsense. Tell her," she went on, glancing towards me, "that I am as well as she is. She'll take your word for it, doctor."

"If I cannot give a clean bill of health," replied he, turning to me, "I hope, at least, it is nothing very——"

"No, indeed."

"And a little patience——"

"Yes, yes, only that," she said, with a

light catching of her breath that was almost like a sob. "You hear, Netta, only a little patience."

"And all will be well again, no doubt."

"Yes, quite well—better than—that is—yes, a little patience," she murmured, turning away the great soft eyes, and fixing them on the old mulberry-tree whose brown branches, hanging motionless in the chill drizzle, had not a green leaf on them to tell of the days that were gone.

"I don't think, somehow," said the doctor to me as he drew on his gloves in the porch, "that there's anything in my bottles and boxes likely to do her much good. Of course I'll send her something or other, but, if I were you, I'd just leave her to herself for a bit, and, at all events, whatever you do, don't thwart her. Let her have her own way, or I shall find her thrown on my hands in good earnest."

"But——"

"My dear young lady. You know the instinct of wounded animals is to hide away till they're better, or——"

"Or die."

"Precisely. Well, man is but an animal, is one; and your sister——"

"Is wounded, you fancy?"

"Well, fancying isn't my province, and I'm only a poor body-healer. Good-bye, Miss Jeannette. Unless you send for me, I shan't come again, eh?" and then, somewhat abruptly, the doctor took his departure.

"Only taken a little cold," I said, reassuringly, to Sir Morton, where he stood waiting the doctor's verdict. "And no wonder. It really was too stupid of her to go rushing into that horrid, damp wood."

"St. Grimwold's wood? What on earth did she do that for?"

"Well. Just after you both parted, she

happened to catch sight of Lady Havering's carriage coming along from Havering, and so she turned in at the little gate, and ran down the steps to,—don't be angry with her, Sir Morton,—to avoid meeting her."

"But she was mistaken. There was no carriage. None passed me, as it must have done."

"You didn't notice it, perhaps."

"Nonsense," he smiled, "if one was sunk fathoms deep in meditation, that thing would soon rumble one to the surface. Besides, do you suppose Lady Havering would have passed me, solitary, conspicuous wayfarer as I must have looked, and not offered me a seat. Lina must have been mistaken, I tell you."

"Not very likely."

"Or, perhaps, the carriage turned back. The sprinkle was growing into a steady shower just then, and those precious

liveries—— Ah, she turned back, just there, depend upon it.”

“And didn’t see Lina at all, you mean.”

“In any case she couldn’t have done that. Why, she would have been a fiend incarnate, if she had caught sight of her, and not offered her a seat home in her carriage. Why do you smile?” he added, in rather nettled tones. “I don’t see that I have said anything absurd.”

“Don’t you? I beg your pardon then for daring to say I do, Sir Morton. I cannot think her ladyship’s complaisance would reach quite so far as that.”

“You judge my aunt too harshly,” he said. “Upon my honour, I think you do, Netta.”

“That’s just what Lina says.”

And that, I could see, settled the question of damning evidence against me.

“Why, it was only this very morning,

before I came out, that she inquired most amiably after you both. Isoline especially, out of politeness to me that, of course."

"Hardly to us, at all events," muttered I.

"What an unbelieving sinner you are!" he said. "Well, I was rather astonished, I must confess, when she intimated, in tones of honey sweetness,—Oh, no hyperbole, I assure you. It's wonderful what we can do when we try,—that she intended having the pleasure of calling on you in a day or two,' regretting that 'one thing and another' had prevented her doing so sooner."

"That is too kind of her."

"You'll receive her civilly, won't you, Jeannette?" he asked, rather nervously.

"Is not her name Havering, Sir Morton?"

"Thank you," he said, with an air of relief. "What a much-enduring little woman you are on my account! I'm awfully

ashamed sometimes when I think of the worry I seem to have been to you ever since I set foot in the place. I wonder you don't hate me. Perhaps you do. No answer?"

"Some things are better without one."

"When will she be able to come down?"

"Ah! to-morrow, or next day at farthest."

"I hope so; for on Tuesday night I must be in London for a week."

"A whole week?"

"Yes. Things won't settle themselves. I must see Parchington, my solicitor, you know, about keeping all this Havering machinery going while we are in Italy. Well, post noctem lux. I wish that day were come, Netta, and I had her all for my own, as children say. There, speak your mind, and call me the selfish monster that's quivering upon your lips."

"Indeed I had no such thought," faltered I.

"Then you are the saint I always say you are. Good-bye, Jeannette, and give her my dear love, and to-morrow she is to be bonnie again for my sake, tell her that—for my sake, Netta."

And so he went away.

That something or other from Dr. Verity's pharmacopœia duly arrived ; but he had been right when he had pronounced Isoline past his surgery, for there was no change in her of any kind. She acquiesced, however, with a readiness that amazed me, in his desire that she should keep in her room all that day and the next, for the sake of its even temperature. And when next day but one, it seemed to me that she was overstepping his directions, and that to come out of her shell would be the best thing for her, she refused to do so ; and this in face of Sir

Morton's intimation, which I, of course, retailed to her faithfully.

"Away a whole week, you know! Come," I went on, when she answered neither by sign nor word, but kept her gaze on the page before her, "you are not apt to fancy things."

"What do you mean?" she asked, half lifting her head.

"Fancying you're an invalid. Rouse yourself, Lina. You must not give way like this—for his sake."

"For his sake," she murmured. "I can't come down, Netta, tell him," and she bent her head again over her book.

"It's too bad, really," said I. "Upon my word, if ever woman tried a man's patience, you do, you know."

"I'm afraid I—have. But this is to be the last of it. You'll see, Netta."

"Ah. That's all right. You're going to

be a good child, are you?" Then, because I thought it best to leave the subject for the time, I asked her what she was reading. "It must be something very enthralling by the vast amount of attention you are bestowing on it. Mayn't I have some crumbs of your intellectual pursuits, if there is anything new or strange in them?"

"Old as the hills," she replied, holding up the little green-covered volume.

"Oh! the Idylls. What new gem have you unearthed then?"

"Only this. Listen, Netta. 'It is,' read she,

——"the little rift within the lute

That, bye-and-bye, will make the music mute."

"'The music mute,' you hear that?"

"As I have heard it a hundred times before."

"In at one ear, out at the other," smiled she.

"Not at all. It's very beautiful, of course, but——"

"And," she interrupted.

"And

'Ever widening slowly, silence all.'"

"What true, sad, sad words, aren't they, Netta? More sad, or more true; which are they, I wonder?"

"Well, of course, when one has the misfortune to be able to apply them, but really——"

She read on,

"It is not worth the keeping. LET IT GO!"

With a wail of pain those three last little words broke from her lips, so heart-piercingly, so utter in their desolate agony, that I started, and looked at her with a shiver of astonishment; but her face was turned from me, and only her clenched, clasped hands betrayed the agitation her voice had thrilled with.

"Read on," I said, in as matter-of-fact tones as I could command. "Since you have read so far, read on to the end."

But she shook her head, and let the book glide from her knee to the floor. I caught it up.

"But shall it?"

I read—"Answer, darling, answer no.

"And trust me——"

"Not at all," she murmured.

"Or all in all."

"Or all in all,' eh, Lina?" concluded I, throwing my arms about her. "Now will you come down. Sir Morton is there."

"Not to-day," she said.

"Then you are unkind—selfish," I cried, turning from her with an impatient push, "cruelly—hatefully selfish."

No answer.

"And no more worthy to be his wife," I

hurried on, my voice trembling with passionate earnestness, "than a painted doll would be! Why, I would rather see him tied to that poor idiot, Ursula Havering—at least, she has some heart—than to such as you. Cold, unfeeling girl! Do you want to estrange him from you?"

She started and cowered into her sofa-corner like some whipped, goaded creature, and her breath came in short, quick gasps.

"Are you," I went whirling on in my indignation, "trying with these pitiful fast and loose tricks to break his heart?"

She moaned. I was glad of that. At least she could still feel.

"Do you want him," I hurried on, following up the advantage I believed I had attained. "Do you want him to say 'I hate you, Lina'?"

Still utter silence, only the strange, wan smile upon the parched and parted lips, and

the half shrinking, half triumphant light in the dilated eyes meeting mine, look for look now, a light that one more often sees in some self-surrendering martyr than in this selfish turmoil which we call life. Or was it indeed the sign and stamp of a heart which had awakened from its dream of love, and struck upon the dreary shores of a supreme indifference?

“Lina! For the last time, are you coming?”

The pale lips firmly closing, and a slow, deliberate shaking of her head, were my only answer. I carried it to Sir Morton.

CHAPTER IV.

FOREIGN CORRESPONDENCE.

“**J**OB’S patience was nothing to yours,” I said, as, some ten minutes after, I walked beside Sir Morton Havering to the gate, where his mail phaeton stood waiting to take him to St. Grimwold’s, for a smothered sigh had been his only comment on the message I had brought him. “I am certain, if I were in your place, I could not bear with such caprices.”

“Indeed you would,” he interrupted, with a wintry smile, holding out his hand in farewell, “for if I know you, Jeannette, as

you are,—and I think I do,—you would be no more a fair-weather lover than I am. The poor child is ill and upset. Good-bye. Take care of her for me till I come back. I'd give something not to be obliged to go, but—” and then, with a face some thought suddenly brightened, he sprang into the chaise, and, as he took the reins, cast one long, wistful glance towards Isoline's window. It was close shut, and shrouded over, and as my glance followed his I fancied that the folds of the muslin blind stirred slightly, and a faint shadow faded from them; but the autumn gloaming is a rare time for fancies, and when I looked again all was deathstill.

The wind blew dank and cutting, but I waited to watch the chaise until the turn of the steep road hid it from me; and there still a minute more I waited, for through the fast gathering mist loomed the figure of

the postman. "Is he going to be a frequent visitor?" I wonder to myself. Certain it is that this is the second time in two days that he has presented himself at our gate. A thing, I believe, unprecedented in the annals of our occupation of the cottage.

A letter for Lina, too, again! Not a cheerful-looking missive. None of your comely, cream-laid, four-inch square missives, but a flimsy, attenuated thing, with a scrawl of a superscription, and a half illegible postmark. Only the stamp—whose device, to my disordered imagination, is cruelly suggestive of a smashed spider, but which on closer investigation turns out to be the proud cognizance of the German Empire—sets its point of departure beyond question. Having turned the letter over and over, and wondered why Lina's unknown correspondent does not take a few writing lessons, I carry it up to her.

“From across the ‘silver streak’ again,” I say, certainly not without a touch of the curiosity I feel. “I’m sure I hope it brings satisfactory intelligence,” I add, with a suspicion of irresistible pique in my tones. Pardonable surely when it is borne in mind that there has never been a time when our letters have not been mutual property.

“Yes,” she replied, quietly placing the letter in my hands, after having eagerly scanned it through; “and the *Undine* starts on Friday night. That will do very——”

“What do you say, child?” I cried, looking from the half read letter in my hand.

“Ah!” she replied. “Read it through, Netta. You’ll understand it better then.”

And, as well as I could—for the words, besides their vile caligraphy and travesty of English, swam before my astonished eyes—I did read.

"Indeed, I understand nothing," I said.

"And who is this woman? Amalie von—what?"

"Puppendorf. Gräfin von Puppendorf. I'm going to be her governess, Netta."

"Her——"

"Her children's governess. The young Graf Adalbert Rudolf August von Puppendorf, and his sister, Wilhelmina Sophie Amalie Sigismunda——"

"Are you really insane, Lina? What is this nonsense you are talking?"

"It isn't nonsense. But, of course I'm not surprised at you, Netta," she went on, with an assumption of ease, whose exaggeration told its unreality. "You didn't know anything about it. How should you? And I—I would not tell you till I was sure of—of my prize."

"Your prize!"

"There's many a slip, you know, 'twixt

cup and lip," she went on, with a ghastly smile, "and of course, if the Gräfin, you see, hadn't thought I should suit, I must have tried again, and—I wish you wouldn't stare so—and I was so horribly afraid, as I hadn't done any of this sort of thing before—governessing, you understand. Do you?"

"Go on."

"Sort of thing before, they would think I shouldn't do. But I spoke up for myself—I can always hold my own when I choose, can't I?—and you see what she, the Gräfin, you know, says—'Chiefly demand my children a lady who can teach to eat pretty and to musicise.'"

"What on earth's that?"

"Oh! you dunce! Forgotten all your German already. Musiciren, my dear, play music of course. I can do that fairly. And as to eating—" the ghost of a smile twinkled in her eyes.

"How absurd you are! Perhaps, when you have done, you will give me the key to this ridiculous riddle, then I may be better able to appreciate the farce," said I, indignantly. "In the meantime, it may be as well to remind you that the betrothed wife of Sir Morton Havering——"

"Hush!" she broke forth, imploringly. "Why will you be so cruel? No—not cruel, of course, not cruel, but so—so—— Look here, Netta. That is all at an end, you know it is, and I could not—— Netta! Netta! I could not meet him again. Don't ask me to try. He is—so good—so kind, it might distress him."

"Are you mad?" reiterate I.

"Don't keep saying that, but help me, help me, Netta darling. Be reasonable, look sensibly at it. Why, see how quietly and neatly I've arranged it all. Without a scrap of fuss. Oh, I tell you what it is,

liebes Fräulein,—see how my German's coming back to me already, isn't it?—I tell you what it is, you don't know your sister's value a bit;” and she laughed hysterically. “Why, nineteen women out of twenty would have made a scene about—about——”

“You wish to break with Sir Morton Havering?”

“I mean to do so,” she said, in clear, steady tones.

“Entirely?”

“Utterly. What a senseless question, Jeannette. Can there be half measures in these things? It must be ‘not at all,’ you know, or ‘all in all,’” she added, taking out her letter case, and beginning to write.

“What is that you are doing, Lina?”

“Eh—eh—wait a second. It's just post-time, and this must go to-night. The *Undine* starts on Friday evening, I tell you, The Gräfin is very kind, she's put all about

the times. Do be quiet, there's a dear ;" and in my state of semi-stupefaction I obeyed, watching the little white hand gliding swiftly over the paper in the dull glimmer of the hastily lighted toilet-candle. "There!" she said, at last, folding the letter, and directing it.

*Gräfin von Puppendorf,
Schloss-Puppendorf,
Preussen,
Deutschland.*

"or Germany ought it to be, to make the post-office people understand, you know? Ah, both, that's best. Germany up in the left-hand corner, and Deutschland down here at the bottom, so. Now it must be safe. Will you post it for me, Netta?"

"Will I cut off my right hand?" I said.

"Now, Jeannette, listen to me," she said, all the rush and hurry of her manner calmed down into a strange collected gravity, and,

approaching me with the letter in her hands, she rested them on mine, looking earnestly in my face. "You like Sir Morton Havering?"

"Of course I do," promptly replied I, wondering how many years of my life I would have bartered for the power of being able to fight down that crimson rush flooding to my cheeks; but Isoline betrayed not a spark of surprise or curiosity, and only continued to scan my face with studious intentness. "You value his happiness, then?" she said.

"If I did not——"

"But you do?"

"You must know that I do."

"I think I do," she said, softly. "I think I know something of how much you do."

"And so too I value yours," sturdily began I.

"My dear," she nodded, with a slightly

impatient jerk of her head, "I don't think words are wanted between us to remind me of that ; but then, you see, it isn't only happiness—what people call happiness—that is the question now. It is just my peace of mind, no more than that—just a little thing enough, Netta. You won't take it from me ; you won't be so unreasonable—unkind, I mean—as to step in between me and—why do you shiver so?—between me and—what is right?"

"God forbid I should, darling!" I said, wonderingly, kissing the upturned face. "Only tell me what I must do for you, to make you happy."

"Do for the best, you mean," amended she. "And you will do that—you promise?"

"I promise."

"Post this, then," and she slid the Countess's letter between my fingers.

"Anything but that," I began.

"And is that all your promises are worth?" she cried, turning on me with a stern, fierce sparkle in her eyes. "Give it me then—give it me!" and she seized the corner of her letter that my fingers gripped fast as a vice now, "and let me do it myself. O God! to think there is no creature in all the wide world to help me!" she sobbed wildly, as she snatched her waterproof from its peg. "It is all harder even than I thought. If ever trouble should come to you, Netta—if it can, if it can—will you be quite so alone, I wonder, as I am now? Give me the letter!"

But my hands were stronger than hers, and I held it clutched fast.

"Give it me, I say," she went on, "and keep your fine promises——"

"I made a prior one, Lina, to Sir Morton," said I, solemnly. "And to do as you ask me now, would be to break that."

She gazed at me with speculative curiosity.

"What might it be," she asked, "this great promise?"

"To take good care of you till he came back, my little caged birdie."

"If one has a screech-owl," she replied, with a contemptuous smile, "one would fancy one valued it, because it happened to be one's own; but when it's flown away, what a relief! And if you had any real regard for him, you would do as I ask you."

"That is, I should perjure myself."

"Yes," she replied, boldly.

"You are a strange girl, Lina," I said.

"I cannot understand you."

"Why should you try?" urged she. "It would be enough if you loved me. Hark! striking five, Netta! If you have a spark of pity in you—for the love, the old love's

sake that once you had for me, give me that letter, Jeannette!"

And with a wail of agony she threw herself upon me, and, tearing the letter from my relaxing fingers, staggered with it to the door.

"Lina!" I said.

She turned, clinging, panting, and exhausted, to the handle, and fixed her bright, hollow eyes on me with keen, questioning look.

"Is it your solemn and deliberate wish that I should do this thing?"

"As the heaven is above us—yes," she said, in a low, firm voice.

And, taking the letter from her, I carried it to the post-office.

CHAPTER V.

“LET IT GO.”

DID Mother Eve, when she took that first fatal apple-bite, shrink back so utterly appalled at her own act as I did when I heard Isoline's letter slide down the incline of the box? The deed was almost as irretrievable, and no sooner had I perpetrated it than I began to ask myself how I had been brought to obey the will of this girl, who sometimes, I fancied, had barely a will to call her own, so rarely did she exercise it, and so easily and contentedly she had always taken life.

"Don't thwart her," had been Dr. Verity's charge—"don't thwart her in whatever she make take a fancy to do."

Almost unconsciously those words had influenced me to do as she desired. There was something in the appealing intensity of her eyes that had seemed to impel me. But Dr. Verity had certainly dreamed of no such vagary as this.

"And now," pondered I, as I retraced my steps—"now?"

Already Lina, as I entered her room again, was busy meeting the prose details of her strange resolve with a practical common sense that amazed me. Kneeling beside an open trunk, which she must herself have dragged from its corner, and had denuded of its rosebud chintz covering, she was engrossed in stowing into its capacious depths the hundred and one articles of attire which it is at once woman's joy and calamity to be

unable to stir without, and which, in orderly disorder, were now strewn about in every direction.

Always neat and dainty in her personal arrangements, these operations seemed to be superinducing none of that chaos confounded which the Nemesis of slatterns brings upon them when they make a move. No gordian tangles there of lace, and artificial flowers, and errant cotton-strands; no conglomerate of cake-crumbs, pins, cosmetics, chocolate creams, and hooks and eyes; no higgledy-piggledy of discarded gloves—none of these horrors to be struggled with. Simply and unfussily she was laying away in that trunk the dresses and other gear, which, as they were hidden from my sight, seemed already to be taking something of herself away too. For they were all things she had worn, bearing the stamp of her individuality.

Helplessly, and still in that sort of semi-stupor I could not shake off, I stood looking on, until at last, in sheer terror lest the smothered cry in my heart should burst forth, I flung aside my bonnet, and, with some vague intention of assisting her, rushed desperately at the first garment that met my eyes. It was a handsome fur-lined cloak.

"Not that," she said, looking round.

"Oh! no, of course not," returned I, thinking, with what thoughts I might, of that wretched sea-journey. "It will be warm to—wear on board."

"No, I shall not take it. It is not mine."

I dared say no more. It had been Sir Morton's birth-day gift to her a month before. Vexed at my stupid blunder, I made a fresh sortie among a quantity of exquisitely stitched and embroidered linen and cambric. That proved equally disastrous.

"Nor those," she said, gently pushing them beyond my reach.

"Why not?" I asked. "At all events, those are yours, bought with your own money."

"With our money," corrected she. "But they're much too grand for a governess," she added, with a little laugh.

I groaned in spirit.

"And I have a good stock without them," she went on.

"And what's to be done with them, pray?"

"Why, keep them, Netta dear. Our clothes, you know, fit one another. Is that grammatical, I wonder? I must mind how I talk now, mustn't I? What I mean is, that my things fit you quite as if they were made for you, and you had better keep them by you till—you want them. Reach me that—no, no, our mother's hair-

bracelet, I mean. So, here's a snug corner for it. That's my very own," she went on, carefully nestling it away among the folds of a soft handkerchief. "My very own, at all events."

Then, rising from her knees, she went to the toilet-table, and taking up the handsome pearl and gold locket I had first taken up, she handed it to me.

"And you must put this with the other things that belong to him, will you, Netta? There are no letters, you know. I'm glad of that, very glad," she went on, with a little shrug. "One's letters are—well, you understand, dear, what you are to do, don't you? And we'll make a parcel of them all presently, excepting this;" and she raised her left hand, and attentively considered the hoop of brilliants glistening there. That betrothal-ring! How I re-

membered the day it had been given !
"Excepting this." Then gently and tenderly, as though it were some sentient thing, she drew it from her finger, and, ere I was aware, had slipped it upon mine.

"How well it looks !" she murmured, admiringly turning my wrist hither and thither, to catch the glint of sickly yellow candle-light upon the gems. "Much, far, far better than—— Why, your hands are worlds prettier than mine, Jeannette. Don't take it off, child !" she cried, hurriedly, as I began drawing it from my finger. "Promise me you won't do that, until you—give it to him. Think, if it got lost, Jeannette," she pleaded, earnestly, "and it is so precious, so very precious !"

"I cannot wear it," protested I. "What right have I——"

"More than I have," she cried, with a grating laugh. "Oh, you superstitious child!" she went on. "I see now, it's unlucky, you think, to——"

"Indeed, I wasn't thinking any——"

"Indeed, and indeed. Look then, this shall send all the ill luck flying ten times over; "and as she spoke she bent down, and, lifting my fingers to her lips, softly kissed the one encircled by the costly stones, leaving them, as she lifted her head, twice radiant with the tears that hung about them; but there was no trace of agitation in the still frank face turned now on mine, working beyond control with the conflict of thoughts she had stirred within me.

In trust only, as I held it, I felt as guilty in that ring's possession as though I had come by it thievishly, and yet, hot pincers should not have torn it from me.

And who shall say, when that contact of Eternity's emblem, never ending, never beginning, thrilled heart and soul of me through and through,—who shall dare to say, until soul and body declare unto each other "I know thee not," that sign and symbol are dead letters? How shall profane hands strive to set asunder the work which heaven has welded? But what could Lina reckon of those thoughts of mine? To her, of course, the charge she had laid upon me, was the simple act of yielding back a treasure, worth, indeed, how many a guinea sterling, but, all the same, what a poor, valueless thing in her eyes now! Why, with that ring she was yielding up so calmly, was she not voluntarily returning to him, who had laid at her feet the most priceless gift man can give to woman, his honourable love? A treasure the world's whole wealth cannot buy. And she could toy it

away in this light fashion! with just a watery sunbeam of a smile, and the faintest zephyr of a sigh.

How could I realize her power to do this?—I who so pitifully hungered for one poor crumb of that load of love she was squandering and scattering to the winds. Love? Well, was she right then, after all? If indeed she had so little—but that I strove in vain to grapple with. I could not look into my heart, where his image lived, and conceive the miserable void which must be in hers; and from my soul I pitied her, hugging about me the fetters of my own hopeless passion—pitied her with a contemptuous pity, and prayed heaven to help her then, at least, for her honesty's sake. Oh! she was honest! Yes, too honest, it seemed to me, for us ever to live again the old two in one life under one roof; my forbearance with her shallow caprices would

never have reached to that. And so perhaps she had, as she herself insisted, chosen well for us all. And I would oppose her no longer. On the contrary, I would do my best to speed her—this sister of mine, whom my father on his dying bed had bidden me guard and cherish—to speed her to that strange, wide, far-off land. Oh! surely she was right, if the music had indeed grown mute. More right, a million times over, more right, if its chords had never been truly struck. No, such music is mockery, worse than eternal silence, harmfuller than deadliest poison. Let it go!

CHAPTER VI.

SUB SIGILLO CONFESSIOINIS.

OVER and over again, as I watched Lina going calmly about her packing arrangements, I wondered whether they brought her any reminder of those other preparations which should have been beginning then. For the first days of November were close upon us now, and the early part of December had been fixed for the wedding. If she did, she made no sign.

Once indeed I fancied I could trace a few evidences of agitation in her face when she had returned, after some hours' absence,

from making a few farewell calls among her old village friends—the poor ones, I mean; the rich ones she troubled not two straws about. It was plain to me that I should have to make the story of her flight good to the upper ten of Havering quidnuncs as best I might. “Gone for a long visit,” that, you see, was what I was to say. Nothing could be easier, could it? And, of course, there would be no gapings and hand-liftings, no sittings in judgment over this break between Sir Morton and Lina; and, supposing there were, what—as she most reasonably put it—what concern was it of theirs? all that was just making bugbears when—et cetera, et cetera.

Only that one time, then, I noticed that her face betrayed signs of what had been passing within.

“You have been a long while gone?” I said, interrogatively.

"I've been to St. Grimwold's."

"What for?"

"To say good-bye to—no, Netta, why should I conceal the truth?—to speak to Mr. Glastonbury. I wanted to ask him something. You see," she went on, after a short pause, "I wanted to be sure I was right in what I'm doing."

"Oh! you have your doubts, then?"

"N-not doubts, only——"

"My dear Lina, if you wanted to go to confession, the vicar would have been a more discreet and learned——"

"No," she interrupted; "he's a dear old man, but he's not half so discreet, or so learned either, as Swithin Glastonbury. I think very highly of Swithin Glastonbury," she added, with all the soberness of matured criticism—"very highly indeed, Netta."

"Oh!"

"And I thought you did too once."

"Once!—I do still; and seriously, if you wished to avail yourself of the ordinance—"

"Don't, Netta. I didn't expect you, with your opinions——"

"My dear, I have none. I've grown to be sure of nothing lately."

"Your opinions," persisted she, "that you'd make a joke of that sort of thing. Even if I had—but I didn't—I had nothing wrong to confess—that is, I just wanted his opinion about something."

"Wouldn't mine have served the purpose?"

"I've had yours," she said, with a slight smile. "It was about my going away, you see. If, under the circumstances——"

"Which he is acquainted with?" I asked, in no small surprise and curiosity.

"When I told him, not before. And he thought I was justified in going."

"He signified his priestly approval?"

"At last—in the end."

"Not at once? That was considerate of him, at all events. You don't mean that any fleeting sympathy with what it may cost me to lose you, influenced him," I said, in a bitter tone, "to keep it temporarily back?"

"I'm afraid he didn't give that much consideration," she said, with another curious smile. "He was thinking of something else."

"Of more importance," said I, with a little jerk of affront.

"To him, yes. Look here, Netta, you don't know Swithin Glastonbury."

"As well as you, I do."

"No, I saw long ago what you refuse to see—that he likes you."

"And I'm glad of it. I've often said so—proud to have the esteem of so good a person."

"Person!—esteem!—oh! Netta, won't you understand? He loves you."

"Surely," I said, with rising choler, "the tables have not been turned, and he has made you his fair confessor."

"I guessed it months ago," she said, paying my remark no atom of attention.

"And supposing you did," said I, blazing now with offended dignity, "wouldn't it have been as well—more seemly—to have left him to own the soft impeachment to the person most concerned—me, for instance?"

"If you could have given him the answer that would have satisfied him; but you couldn't," she said, stoutly.

"How clever you are!"

"No," she replied, "only right. I know he's nothing to you."

"You shall not say that. I esteem no man more, nor woman either."

"Esteem!" she said, crimsoning. "He doesn't care a bit for that, I tell you."

"And don't I tell you it's all I have to give him? He ought to know it."

"He does," she sighed.

"Thanks to you. Really, Lina, you're becoming a mighty diplomatist," I replied, in half nettled, half amused tones, and wholly mystified; "you manage my affairs for me as well as—better than you do your own. But I know you didn't go to chat over his *affaires du cœur*——"

"No, of course not. Was it likely he'd allude to them to me?"

"Then how can you possibly know——"

"Because, Netta—I—have eyes," she said, lifting the soft luminous orbs in question to mine. Indeed she had! How they looked down my anger then. "As to words, Netta, didn't somebody say once that words are given to conceal our thoughts?"

Well, he said nothing about you—not a syllable till I mentioned your name, casually, in reference to myself, don't you see."

"And the upshot of it all is that he approves of your going away."

"He says I—am right."

"I'm sure both I and Sir Morton are vastly indebted to him for his opinion," said I, gathering up my work, and rising from my seat. "I'm out of all patience with you, Lina, and I'm going to bed."

"Won't you say good night first?" she said, tremulously. "There won't be many more good nights, Jeannette."

"Good night," I said, coldly, kissing her forehead.

"No," she cried, throwing her arms about my neck, and clinging to me so that I could not stir, "that won't do. Kiss me, Netta dear—like a good child."

And then yearningly her lips hung on

mine, and still, when I turned from her, she caught me back once more, and kissed me again.

On the stairs, just outside her door, loomed out through the shadows the hateful trunk, all addressed and corded.

"Miss Lina says the carrier's to take it to St. Grimwold's next time he passes," groaned Mrs. Tugnutt. "Oh! Miss Netta dear, what does it all mean? And what will Sir Morton say? What is this that is being done?"

I shook my head, and turning in at my own door, locked it, and sat down on the edge of my bed to think.

Ay, what was it that was being done? And how came I, my sister's keeper, to be standing by, and holding out barely so much as a languid finger to prevent it? Granted, as in sober truth I had come to think, that Lina's step was a wise one, who was I, that

I should judge? Admitted that these two had misestimated their fitness for being yokefellows, Sir Morton had, at all events, made his choice with his eyes open, and had a claim to equal odds with her, but here a march, as it were, was being stolen upon him.

“And it shall go no farther!” I cried to myself. “To-morrow Sir Morton shall know all. He shall be left in the dark no longer; though what I do estranges me from her for ever!”

Reviewing into something like order the confusion of plans crowding to my brain, I decide first to send Sir Morton a telegraphic summons to return immediately to Haver-
ing, but I quickly discard the idea, for has not experience taught me that her lover's presence under our very roof is of no avail in bringing them together? And, if she refused to see him before he went away,

how much more strenuously she would do so now !

Only in some stratagem, which his great affection for her may be able to strain itself to invent, could lie the remotest possibility of a move which would not prove disastrous, and how could the curtness of a telegraphic message give him a true grasp upon the circumstances of the case? Of course a letter might do this, but what a letter! How should I begin it?—and, much more, how should I end it? Such a letter would have borne with it the curse of letters, and said at once too much and too little.

Besides, there was no time to be lost, and a day's post lay between London and Haver-
ing. No, the best, only true course open to me was to go myself to Sir Morton, and tell him all. There was a nine o'clock ex-

press from St. Grimwold's which reached London somewhere after twelve midday, and a down one starting at 4.35, which would see me home again at Cliffe Cottage by ten o'clock.

And how to account to Lina for my long absence? Discretion was, in this case, decidedly the better part of valour. I dared not face her searching looks, that I felt; and as I encountered Mrs. Tugnutt coming out of her room, and the good woman uttered an exclamation of astonishment at seeing me bonneted and cloaked so early, I lifted a silencing finger.

"Is she awake?" I asked, taking Dolly by the arm, and drawing her down to the hall-door with me.

"No, poor lamb. She looked so weary and pale, I hadn't the heart to waken her," replied she, "I've let her bide."

"That's right," I nodded. "I'm going to London, Dolly, to fetch Sir Morton."

"God bless you, deary!"

"But you mustn't let her know."

She pursed her lips, and laid her finger on them to seal the assurance.

"What shall you say?"

That wanted deliberation, but Dolly said she'd "make up something. And, anyhow, I can say you're gone to St. Grimwold's, and wasn't certain when you'd be back, that you said you had a deal to do."

"Something of that sort," I nodded. "I don't see that you can make a better story. I wouldn't say anything to Reuben, if I were you."

"I should think not indeed," she said. "Men always lets cats out of bags dreadful. No, thank you. Besides, he's going out. He's got to go down to St. Grimwold's. There's something broke with the

grass-mower, and he won't let anyone but them where 'twas bought look at it. But you'll be started from the station long first. He ain't but just down to his breakfast."

"And if the carrier calls for her trunk—it's his day, you know—why, it must go, I suppose."

"Ah, yes. There's no call to make a sorrow of that. 'Twill be a shilling ill-spent. Though perhaps it isn't even that, for he's a hard-working, honest chap, is the St. Grimwold's carrier; and he'll just have to take it up the hill and down again, like the king o' France. 'To be left till called for' is wrote upon the lid as plain as plain. And even if it did get carried over sea by mistake, Miss Lina's not her box. There, make your mind easy; you go, and I'll manage here, somehow. Don't worry about that. Hark! there's the 'bus."

And with no time for another word, I

hurried down to catch the little omnibus which always left Havering in time to meet the up and down London express.

CHAPTER VII.

THE 10.30 EXPRESS.

IT was with no very pleasurable sensation that I perceived Mrs. Abigail Sharples seated at the vehicle's further end; its sole occupant, and having bidden her a civil good morning, I subsided down by the door, devoting myself to the consideration of the beauties of nature as they appear through an omnibus door-window on a raw, drizzling November morning, and hoped that Mrs. Sharples would not remain my sole travelling companion all the way to St. Grimwold's. The hope, however, was a

vain one, and we continued to hold our joint sway to the end uncontested.

As we clattered over the stones of the High Street, I inferred that we should pull up at Milligan's for Mrs. Sharples to alight, or the palatial cheese and butter establishment—a conclusion to which our conductor had lent himself, with what fair and sufficient show of reason I was, however, not able thoroughly to estimate, until he glided down from his eminence on the roof, and, clinging with both arms to the door, looked in.

“Milligan's, you said, mum?” he shouted inquiringly of the lady's-maid. “Here you are,” and he pulled open the door.

“After you, Miss Latour, mem,” obsequiously said Mrs. Abigail, still keeping her seat.

“Ah! thank you, I'm going on. Railway station, please,” I added, for the conductor's interrogative glance at me left me no alter-

native; and then I drew my skirts about me, in order to afford Mrs. Sharples every facility for getting out. I had had more than enough of the keen cold glitter of her eyes, which she had scarcely taken off me ever since we started, and now, as I spoke, their livid intensity seemed to have redoubled, gleaming on me through the omnibus's mouldy, straw-impregnated atmosphere, with the crafty intentness of some evil reptile in its lair.

"Here you are, Mrs. Sharples," reiterated the conductor.

"Ah! I'm so sorry I troubled you to stop——"

"'Tain't none," he said, with laconic politeness, originating possibly in a desire to get rid of her with all decent haste, and be the free man he would be after he had deposited me at the station.

"Ah! but I've changed my mind. I prefer

going on to the station, now I think of it. There's a small parcel waiting there for her ladyship. Dear, now, to think how near I was to forgetting it!" she added, apostrophizing me.

"I can bring it along for you," obligingly said the youth, "as we comes back."

"Ah! no, thanks; it's partic'lar, and only my 'ands must touch it," added she, as if those pale claws were all purity and gentleness. "Drive on, if you please."

"Go ahead then," shouted our conductor to his coadjutor on the box, banging the door to with rather superfluous exercise of arm-power, as if the delay had not improved his temper. "Railway, Jim."

The five-minutes' bell was already jangling out its warning as we rumbled up to the booking-office, and, as quickly as I could, I descended, and made my way to the ticket place.

"I thought it was thirty shillings," I said, as the clerk handed me ninepence change from the gold I had laid down.

"Thirty to London Bridge," he replied ;
"you said Victoria."

"Yes."

"All right—twenty-nine and threepence."

Dropping the change into my purse, I turned away, coming, as I did so, into sharp collision with Mrs. Sharples. That eternal woman ! what did she do there, treading on my heels ? Had not she lived in Havering long enough yet, to know where the parcel's-office was ?

"Oh, dear ! I beg your pardon, Miss Latour, mem. I do hope I have not hurt you."

"No," said I, with as much good-humour as I could muster, "but you startled me. Didn't you want the parcel's-office ? That's down, you know, at the end of the platform."

"To be sure—so it is, now. How could I have made such a ridiclus mistake?" she said, following me out upon the platform. "What a sad, miserable day you've chose for your out, to be sure, Miss Latour, mein!"

"It is not a matter of choice," returned I, irritated out of my taciturnity.

"Isn't it now? Well, I supposed you might be going a pleasuring to the great metrolopolis."

"I have more business in hand, I think, than pleasure, just now," said I, not choosing to let the insufferable woman imagine that she was hoodwinking me; for I felt sure that she knew, as well as I did, that things were going anything but straight at the cottage.

"Ah, well, of course, business is business, and dooty is dooty, and we know all *her* paths are pleasantness."

“Good morning,” I said, stepping into the train, with a sense of satisfaction that she could not follow me there. Two minutes more, and all remembrance of Mrs. Sharples had faded from my brain, and till the smoke-dried cabbage gardens and network of suburban streets loomed dimly through the grimy fog,—ten times more depressing by reason of the great copper-coloured disk standing luridly in its midst,—my thoughts were all absorbed in the task I had undertaken.

CHAPTER VIII.

MR. PARCHINGTON.

I HAD Sir Morton's address in my notebook. It was at an hotel in the neighbourhood of Charing Cross, the "Golden Star;" and stepping into a hansom, as though in all my life I had never fulminated vials of wrath against that strong-minded and also fast proceeding—for extremes meet—when practised by other young women. But this was no time for niceties. "Dooty," as Mrs. Abigail was pleased to call it, sternly beckoned me on; and for every second the good, high-stepping animal between the shafts

saved me, I felt I could have given him a golden oat, had he cared for such vanities.

"Mind how you put your foot, lady," warns my Jehu, as he politely descends from his eminence, and assists me to alight. His caution is not perhaps quite superfluous, for it is in hot haste I cross the pavement, and run up the broad steps of the "Golden Star."

"Yes, ma'am, Sir Morton Havering is staying here," replies the hall-porter, to my inquiry. "I believe he's out, though. Sir Morton Havering," he continues, addressing a heavily-laden waiter, issuing from the coffee-room, "gone out, isn't he, Charles?"

"Gone out these two hours."

"Will he be back soon?" I ask, with a sinking heart.

"Can't say at all, ma'am—miss—won't you take a rest for a minute?" he adds, looking rather hard at me.

"Thank you," I say, "I can't—I mustn't—have you any idea where he has gone?"

Not the ghost of one. Neither can one of all that conclave of sympathising waiters, which has gradually assembled in the hall, shed the faintest light upon the subject.

"Of course the gentleman was not expecting of you, ma'am?" says the one called Charles, rubbing his chin, as he thoughtfully considers my exterior.

"No. Cannot you give me the slightest clue? My business is of the greatest importance."

"He's safe to be back to dinner," said Charles, "he ordered it afore he went out. Seven sharp."

Half-past one now!

"You cannot guess where he was going? Which way did he turn?"

A faint smile flickered in the faces about me.

"It isn't easy to say what becomes of our visitors, once they're down the bottom of these steps, till they turn up again, you see, 'm," said the porter, "and——"

"The gentleman mostly goes that way of a morning," said Charles, jerking his thumb over his shoulder Strandwards.

And does not Lincoln's Inn lie to that point of the compass?—Lincoln's Inn Fields, where I know Mr. Parchington's offices are? Gone there, of course; and with a few hurried thanks, and an intimation that I should come again, if not sooner, certainly at seven o'clock, should I not in the meantime succeed in finding Sir Morton, I left the "Golden Star," and chartered another Hansom, which set me down at the gates of Lincoln's Inn, to pursue the house-to-house, or rather door-to-door visitation, entailed by my ignorance of Mr. Parchington's number.

Eureka! At last. Down a flight of

steps which, in the days when people of quality tenanted the fine old houses, led to the kitchen regions. Across the forecourt's seamed flags, in at a dark and cavernous portal, on the dingy stones of whose up-rights Mr. Parchington's name stands inscribed, and so, after a brief delay which still seems an age to me, during which the clerk in the outer office informs me that his chief will be at liberty immediately—"gentleman who has been with him some time just gone away,"—I am ushered into the presence of a gold-bespectacled, elderly gentleman, who regards me with benign curiosity.

"Dear! dear! dear!" he says, when I name the object of my quest. "You are looking for Sir Morton Havering? Yes, quite right; you were quite correct in your supposition. He has been here these two hours, conferring with me on important

business, very important. Ah! to be sure, you are Miss Latour. Have I the honour of addressing Miss Isoline Latour?" he asks, with increasing suavity.

"My name is Jeannette—Isoline is my sister."

"Ah! Ten thousand pardons. Quite so. Not—ahem—the future—ahem—the future Lady Havering? What a pity! Dear! dear! how very unfortunate for Sir Morton, to be sure! He hasn't been gone five minutes. I almost wonder you didn't meet him. Went out by the other gate perhaps. Most unfortunate for him, to be sure—to be sure," he continued, reflectively, drawing off his spectacles and slipping them into their case. "And of course your business with him was pressing?"

"Most urgent."

"Nothing wrong, I do trust; no one ill—your sister, the future——"

"My sister is pretty well," I hurriedly assure him. "Haven't you the faintest notion where he was going, Mr. Parchington? Didn't he——"

"Let me see—let me consider a moment," said the lawyer, tapping his eyebrow; "I have a sort of idea——"

"Yes? yes?"

"Or was it yesterday? No, to-day—just now, of course—he mentioned his intention of looking in on his old friend, Sir—bless my soul—famous physician—lives in Portland Place—old friend of Sir Morton's father, you know—Sir—Sir James—" continued Mr. Parchington, jerking up his straightened forefinger.

"Sir James Cleveland?"

"Cleveland, of course. But do pray take a seat, and rest yourself, if only for a minute. You look—pardon me, but you look fagged to death already—more than

fagged to death. Pray take a glass of wine and one of these sandwiches—ham—a biscuit, then? We shall have you fainting on the way. Oh! you must take a biscuit; they're excellent."

But there are moments of existence when the mere sight of a biscuit is suggestive of strangulation.

"No? Oh! but I insist on the glass of wine, then; while my youth calls your cab."

Long ago Mr. Parchington has pardoned the boorish haste with which I left him that day, wine-glass and decanter in hand, and a look of real concern on his kind, elderly face.

If, in the height of the season, Portland Place is the dreariest of patrician colonies, its utter lugubriousness out of that period is past description, and my heart failed me as I eagerly scanned the rows of windows close shuttered, or with holland-shrouded mirrors

and chandeliers looming like sheeted ghosts through their rain-begrimed panes. Only now I remember that I omitted to ask Sir James Cleveland's number, but Mr. Parchington would not have known it, else he would have told me; and once again there is nothing left for me but to make a haphazard attack, which I begin with a "knock and ring" as invited, on the first door that presented evidences of vitality within; receiving for my pains a lofty negative from the shoulder-knotted gentleman's gentleman, and, before I can frame the inquiry which house may be Sir James's, the door is gently but firmly shut in my face.

Well, the fog is unpleasant, and no doubt, too, that magnificent menial considers it a day on which, if a gentleman would not care to stir out, why, what lady do you suppose—— The comment is simply superfluous, and, as I turn away, I see him,

through the narrow side-lights of the mausoleum-like doorway, re-compose his grand limbs on the fender of his blazing fire, and resume his journalistic studies.

Appalled by this rebuff, I take refuge in the reflection that some humbler guardian of those lofty halls may boast more of the milk of human kindness; and this time ply one of the pair of knockers on the portal of a deserted-looking mansion half a hundred yards lower down. Some considerable delay ensues, and my impatience has just suggested my turning away, when amid a clash and clatter of bolts and bars, as though it guarded a score of condemned felons, the door falls slowly open to the width of some dozen inches, jerking, however, nearly to again by the counterforce of a cable-like chain, while a voice in vinegar-sharp accents demands my business.

“I never interferes with my neighbours,”

says the voice, when I have signified the object of my search; "and I'm set in charge of this 'ere 'ouse on accounts of being a decent, sober female, as can be thoroughly recommended, and I don't know nothing of your Sir Jameses."

"You're sure it's not next door either way," venture I.

"No, I an't. I'm sure of nothin' of the kind. I don't know my neighbours' names from Adam's own. Don't pry into their bizness, and they won't pry into yours. That's my motter. A-bringin' me up them stairs——"

And the door is slammed in my face.

But the third time bears me its proverbial luck, and any damaging estimate of the amiability of the locality's characteristics I may have been tempted to form, are dispelled by the courteous information my third essay elicits. Yes, Sir James Cleveland's house

is the last but one on the other side—where the hansom is standing.

Sir Morton's cab beyond all doubt. My heart bounds joyfully. The sickening oppression—occasioned of course, and no wonder, by the dense yellow air that has been creeping over me this long time past, lightens a little. Only a stone's throw lying between us now. Quite briskly I cross to the opposite kerb, and keep my eyes fixed as steadily as their aching, strangely heavy lids will let me, on that door, only separated from me now by a dozen or so of others, so near I am, and then I see it fly quickly open, and a figure I should recognize among a legion issues from it, and, with a word to the driver, springs into the hansom. In a second we shall be face to face. One light touch of the whip, one backward turn of the wheels, and the cab—drives on! With break-neck speed describing the curve

of that enclosure which, however suggestive of the end of infinite space, is, in sober reality, the threshold of the mighty tract of fashionable London encircling the Regent's Park.

On, on it speeds with an impetus, against which, my limbs heavily handicapped as they have come to be with sharp, tremulous aches and pains, have as much chance as a snail against a three-year-old thoroughbred. Call! Cry out! Well, would it not be the forlornest of forlorn hopes if I could?

I cannot. My parched tongue cleaves to the roof of my mouth, and ere I can draw another painful breath, the hansom is out of sight.

Lost! Foiled again! Lost by the supercilious stupidity and idiotic boorishness of a couple of—— But what time is this to waste in moralizing over these coarse-grained specimens of human nature I have stum-

bled upon? And with one hand clinging to the gaunt area-palings beside me, the other clasped over my eyes, dim with tears of disappointment, I stand, straining my whirling brain to counsel me whither I shall turn.

At least, there is the forlorn hope of ascertaining where Sir Morton is bound for next; and I make a step forward, only one—then I am forced to steady myself by clutching at the iron railings beside me in a manner which it is evident speaks promisingly to a couple of grinning butcher boys, of the appearance upon the scene of policemen and a stretcher. The ecstasy fades from their faces when I leave my hold, and hurry on, scorning now the aid of those treacherous iron spikes, which somehow begin to writhe themselves into monstrously distorted zig-zags, and dance a demoniac, forked-lightning dance before my dazing eyes, be-

neath the gaunt houses, all fusing into one blackened, brownish mass, and threatening to over-topple and crush me on the ghastly white paving-stones, that heave and sway under my feet like a surging sea, whose seething rush of—no, not water—That is steam, of course! Yes, yes, the engine's deafening hiss. Why, I have but just left Havering, and all this is an ugly dream, and presently I shall wake and find him, Sir Morton, and look up into those eyes—Oh, heaven! yes. Oh, my love! and you will bend down and gather me to you, and whisper——

Ah! Lina! Yes, yes, Lina! And am I not bringing him safe back to you, my dear? and, ho! ho! but what are these shining upon my fingers? virgin-pure, and clear as dew-drops, fascinating as snakes' eyes? Ho! ho! Thieves! Leave hold! What business have you with them? Help! Help!

The bell there! pull,—pull hard! Fools! idiots! not that one. Not that one! What are you doing? Not know death-bells from wedding-bells! Sir Morton's wedding-bells! Sir—Morton—Havering——”

CHAPTER IX.

AWAKING.

A DIM, lofty chamber, through the half-opened blinds of whose tall windows faint gleams of sunlight steal athwart the great, square, four-post bed, of which, in some unaccountable way, I find myself the occupant.

A small, clear fire burns in the grate, framed by a high wood mantel-shelf, with its Grinling Gibbons carvings of ribanded wreaths, and above its narrow ledge hangs a large, soft-coloured crayon picture of the famous "Woodman," in a tarnished gilt frame. Ranged, in order due, around the

half-wainscoted walls, hang Mr. William Hogarth's engravings of "Marriage à la mode." A handsome, marble-topped wash-stand is the only modern article of furniture among the stiff-backed, but by no means uncomfortable looking chairs, scroll-ended couch, toilette table draped in pure, fresh muslin, and surmounted by a large, oval, bamboo-framed mirror, and last, not least, a huge, japan cabinet, shiny with age, in whose secret recesses the Baron might have enshrined away that stolen tress Mr. Pope has immortalized, had not the "charge of snuff" sent it shooting "through liquid air," or "Little Fanny Burney" concealed "Evelina's" surreptitious proof sheets.

Only this I understand, that the spacious sober-hued chamber whose air of substantial comfort redeems it from sombreness, and through whose windows the distant roar of traffic comes to mingle soothingly

with the stealthy crackling of the fire, is not my bright little Havering bed-room with its rosebud chintzes and familiar trifles, and whose quiet no sound, save the song of the birds in the old orchard, ever breaks.

But where am I? How come such blessed rest and peace? How is it that I lie here safe, and that never an echo of that howling, yelling demon-chorus which a while since pursued me, mingling with the deafening jangle of some bell, reaches me now. Thank heaven! oh, thank heaven for this haven, and for that voice, low and angel sweet, that bids me rest on, and be content, and then I shall soon be quite well again.

I have been ill then?

"And," I ask, gazing up at the kind, sweet face, not young, and only beautiful for the gentle, womanly charity smiling on her lips, and from those soft, intelligent brown

eyes that shine starlike under the ripple of silvery hair gathered back from the broad clear brow under a cap of exquisite old lace. "And whose house is this?"

"Sir James Cleveland's."

"And you are Lady Cleveland?"

"My dear, no," smiled the lady. "Only Miss Cleveland—Althea Cleveland. Sir James is my brother. I keep house for him."

"And——"

"That will do for the present, dear child, in time I will tell you all. It is enough now for you to know that you are among friends."

I said no more. It was as she said, enough. More even than my poor confused senses could compass. Friends? How could such good Samaritans as these have come to lift me from the murk and misery of that terrible day gradually looming

back into my memory? Heaven send all poor stricken souls, and bodies, such friends as these! Who was I that the Will which laid me low, felled me at their door, and gave me into the hands of the great physician, whose name is in every mouth for his skill?

Gradually, as the days of my recovery glided on, I came to understand from Miss Cleveland all the particulars of what had befallen me. There was nothing remarkable in my attack. Just a case of brain fever, a result probably of nervous tension and anxiety, and accelerated by the penetrating chill of that November day; then weeks of delirium and forgetfulness and exhaustion, till the New Year had come and brought February again.

"You have been very good, Sir James, to—a mere stranger," I said to him one day, striving to clothe my gratitude in words.

"Stranger? my dear child," smiled the sweet grave lips, "can a friend of Morton Havering's be that to me?"

Only too entirely I understood the influence of him who bore that name upon all who crossed his path. For his sake this mercy had been shown me, not of course for my own, and I was abashed and said no more.

"By the by," asked Sir James presently, "when do you intend to vouchsafe him an audience, Miss Jeannette?—Oh! she may well blush, mayn't she, Althea?" he laughed, appealing to his sister, where she sat knitting his stockings by the fire. "Such flagrant ingratitude as hers is! Never once uttered his name since—"

"Goodness knows when!" said Miss Althea, with a certain inflection in her tones which I fancied was intended to convey some sort of warning to her brother,

and to be the commonest of common-places to me.

"Just so," he said, "though yours has been on his lips every day these two months."

"Yes," nodded Miss Cleveland—"not a single day that he hasn't called to inquire after you, my dear."

"He is always so good."

"But we'll reward him to-morrow," continued she, "and have you down in the drawing-room. I've promised him."

"Can't do better," said Sir James, as he went out.

"Miss Cleveland," I asked, after a little pause, "when I was delirious, did I—did I make a very great idiot of myself?"

"One doesn't look for Solomon's wisdom, my dear, at such times," evaded she. "You talked a little nonsense, I daresay."

"But did I mention any name in particu-

lar, like Isoline's, or Lady Havering's, or—
or Sir Morton's, perhaps, or——”

“My dear, what's the use of asking such foolish questions?” she replied, with, I fancied, a slight flush of confusion.

“You won't tell me?” I said.

“Indeed I—really—well, let me think a minute. Yes,—Scamp, to be sure.”

“Scamp!”

“Oh, you had a wonderful deal to say about Scamp, I can tell you. And a charming little dog he must be. And he's very well, and either Mr. or Mrs. Tugnutt takes him a run every day. I've been careful to make special inquiries after Scamp, when I've sent bulletins of you to Cliffe Cottage, because you did seem always thinking about him, and I was sure you'd be so anxious!” rattled on Miss Althea, with astounding rapidity. “And, by-the-by, here's a letter for you. Parkins gave it me as I came up

just now. What could I be thinking of to keep it so long from you? Read it, my dear, read it; don't stand on ceremony with me," and Miss Althea clicked on her needles in silence.

"It is from my sister," I said, glancing at the postmark.

"Ah!"

What my kind nurse knew, or did not know, on the subject of Isoline, I had not been able to fathom, and dared not ask. How comparatively little I knew myself! Only that she had gone. One or two letters I had already received from her, but they had afforded me no real insight into the manner of her going, and this one shed no more light upon her real thoughts. It was torturingly vague, and I folded it again with a sigh.

"Your sister is well, I hope?" said Miss Cleveland, looking up.

"I suppose she is," I answered, with a shrug. "It's very uninteresting—nothing in it. May I read it to you?"

"If you please to do so, my dear," she replied to my startlingly tempting proposal.

"Schloss Puppendorf,

"February, 18—.

"MY DEAREST NETTA (it says),

"I have no doubt you will like a little letter, just to tell you how the world wags with me here in 'this castle by the sea.' In one word, charmingly, then. The Gräfin is quite the personification of amiability and condescension. As to the pupils, the heir-apparent is unquestionably—'high-spirited,' his mother calls him—'a pickle,' would be my summing-up of him, if I had not forgotten all my English, as, indeed, sometimes I think seriously I shall, for not a creature knows a word of it in Puppendorf. This young nobleman's sister, Miss

Wilhelmina Sophie Amalia Sigismunda, has also her little ways. One custom, which they insist on adhering to with a tenacity worthy of a better cause, is that of clutching their knives and forks, where blade and handle meet, with Macbeth-like grip, and my industrious opposition to this practice, would alone do away with any obligations on the part of a certain unnameable personage to provide occupation for these hands of mine. But I mean to conquer at last. Rome wasn't built in a day! Don't imagine it's dull, though we are ten miles from a railway-station. Not to speak of the grand concert we had in the church when the Herr Pastor Schlumbart came back after three months' holiday, and nobody to take his place (what would 'Father Swithin' say to that?) we have had seven Kaffee-klatsches since I have been here. But how should you know what

•

they are, you poor, blissful, ignorant little Engländerin! As if you didn't know! Don't I hear you say that—'like afternoon tea, of course.' *Is it?* No more like afternoon tea than our sweet old Erard is like bagpipes, or Havering is like that noisy, rattling London you seem to be finding so seductive. So, you see, 'what with this, that, and t'other,' as Dolly always says, I'm awfully gay——"

Miss Althea groans under her breath. Does the modish, adjectival slang offend her ears, I wonder?

"—Awfully gay. But about yourself, darling Netta,—seriously—when are you going back home? You have been such a weary, weary long time away. Don't you long to see the little cottage again? And Scamp—dear old Scampy!—give him a kiss and a giant's hug for me. Excuse the blot; tell Scampy it's his kiss; I have such a vile

skewer of a German pen." (Quite as well to explain that, Lina, for the greyish, radiated smudge might be mistaken for a tear.) "Will Miss Cleveland accept my dear love for all her kindness to my old darling? Ask her. This is a stupid letter, and only worth its postage, for the answer I mean to get from Havering. Verstanden! as we say here. Netta, I want you to go home. I have ever such particular reasons for it. And why you haven't gone long ago, when you say you've grown so strong and well—"

"Poor child!" murmurs Miss Althea, "if she knew what 'that slight cold and feverish attack, confining you to your room for a day or two,' Sir Morton told me to call it to her, had really been!"

"—Strong and well ever so long past, really it's unconscionable of you to stay such a time. You're a fascinating young woman, of course, Miss Netta; but don't tire your

friends out—*toujours perdrix*. The world's not made up only of lovers, and even they—may you find them at least 'to one thing constant ever.' As is, dearest Netta,

“Your loving sister,

“ISOLINE.”

“It's a nice little letter, I think, my dear,” said Miss Cleveland.

“Oh! yes. Very,” sighed I.

“Though I daresay—” she paused.

“What were you going to say?”

“Well—only that if there had been just a little more in it about herself, you would have liked it better, no doubt.”

“Yes, indeed. What do I want to know about a couple of vulgar little German children——”

“My dear!” deprecated Miss Althea; “she thought you would be interested, for her sake. She wants you to understand,

too, I think, that she is happy. For my part, I call it a kind, unselfish sort of——”

“Oh! that, of course. Unselfishness—self-forgetfulness—call it what name you please—is the nature of her. Not a common virtue, is it?” laughed I, sardonically.

“And a good thing too,” she replied.

“Good?”

“Yes, it’s apt to bring about an immensity of worry.”

“That’s rather paradoxical, isn’t it?”

“I daresay it may be; but it’s a fact. You know what Polonius says to that young son of his:

‘To thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.’

That’s what I mean, my dear. That’s sound sense of a kind some of your over-delicate consciences are apt to overlook. Polonius was a clever old gentleman, and knew what

he was talking about, though Hamlet was so rude to him, and said he didn't. But your sister writes an amusing letter. I fancy I should like her if——"

"If!" interrupted I. "I hope you're not prejudiced against her on account of—of this unfortunate affair."

"Indeed, I hope not," said Miss Cleveland. "And, if I were ever so much inclined to pronounce judgment, I should only have to remember the defendant is not in court. That would make one's verdict a mild one."

"The circumstantial evidence considered. But then that is so strong."

"Almost overwhelming."

"Almost!"

"Well, well," she said. "Somehow, we're all such poor creatures, we do make such foolish blunders. Perhaps, you see, if you knew all——"

"I think I know all, Miss Cleveland, and I own I can't forgive her."

"Think, think,—there it is! It is just the very thinking that runs heads against posts. Once upon a time I remember thinking—you see I—I had an admirer when I was a girl, my dear."

"A good many more than one, I expect."

"Well, perhaps. I suppose I did have my share," she replied, with a dainty flush. "Though I wasn't a beauty, I had a pretty plump arm—such a scrag of a thing as it is now!—that looked well across the harp-strings, and a tuneful voice that suited 'When in death,' and 'My lodging is on,' and 'Meet me by moonlight,' and the rest of it, and, I don't know how it was, somehow the men liked me, but I only cared for one. And he—well,"—and Miss Althea sighed—"you'll think I deserved my fate, when I tell you I took it into my

head that it was impossible he should care a scrap for me. All the while—I don't mind telling it now, it's so 'long, long ago,' as the old song says—all the while I worshipped the ground he trode on, recollect. But, you see, he was so brilliant, and handsome, and so—never mind, I'm not going to bore you with an old woman's love-story—it is enough that he seemed so far, far beyond me, and when he so much as spoke a civil word to me, I shrank into my shell and sat numchance with ecstasy, which he took, no doubt, for indifference and coldness. I was a fool! That's a strong word, you think. Not a bit too strong. Well, the end of it all was that he never knew how I cared for him, and *I* only knew when it was too late that I had had all his love. It's of no consequence how it all happened, it's the moral, my dear, the little lesson. Ugly or pretty, clever or dull, whatever you may

be, if you take a man's fancy, you're his best bargain, depend upon it, and he'd rather have you as you are, than all the Venuses or Minervas in the universe!"

"And so——"

"Yes. And so that's the way I quarrelled with my bread and butter, and came to be an old maid, as people say. But I don't like calling myself that. Very few women do, my dear, depend upon it, in their heart of hearts; though it's a sort of fashion nowadays to do it, just as it was the fashion a long time ago to put peas in your shoes for your shortcomings. I always call myself a single woman. There's a sense of independence in that, which—Here's Janet with your cup of tea, my dear. Drink it while it's hot."

"And what was the end of it?"

"End?"

"Of your romance."

"Not much romance in it," smiled Miss Althea, "and certainly not worth wasting words upon—only the old story, dear. He married another lady; handsome enough in all conscience she was, and clever, overwhelmingly so, for those days. She wrote a pamphlet on Psychic Force, and that *was* a something then; though of course every school-girl has such bagatelles as those at her fingers' ends now, or ought, with all the training she gets put through. Somehow, though, the two didn't pull well together, excellently matched as they seemed to be; and he took it into his head to travel after a bit, and died out in India of jungle fever. That's all. No romance, my dear. What were you going to say?"

"You might have married some one else," I ventured.

"But those some one elses! Fifty of them wouldn't make the one that's lost,

would they? Esteem, and all that sort of thing, isn't love. Nothing can make it so, let people preach as they will."

"It may grow into it."

"It may," she said, casting a quick, brief glance at me. "I daresay; I never found it to do so, and if I hadn't my best to give, I wouldn't give my second best to any man. That's a poor compliment, he'd rather be without, I fancy."

"And so—here you are, Miss Cleveland."

"Yes. Here I am. And amazingly well it has all turned out; because it wasn't long before James's poor little wife sickened for five years of disease, and of course he couldn't do without a housekeeper and head of his table, just as he was beginning to make a way in his profession. And when she died, poor darling, you see it was not a small comfort to her to feel that James had me to take care of him."

"And your own buried hopes. You forget them."

"No. Never an hour of my life. And—I may be wrong, but I don't believe I am—I think that what's taken away from us here, is being saved up for us till we're fitter for it. I don't mean marrying, you know, and giving in marriage, because that appears to be just an arrangement for temporary purposes, and a very excellent one too, in its way, but I don't think love begins and ends there at all."

"You think——"

"My dear, one only brushes off the best bloom of one's thoughts about it all, to dress them up in words, doesn't one? And, for my part, I don't know words to do it in; but then I never was a brilliant person, and I couldn't so much as tell you the difference between Psychic Force and—and—your pillow's got all dumped down; let me puff

it up comfortably again—and the Voltaic Battery, to save my life. What a charming man your friend Mr. Swithin Glastonbury is," she went on, when she had performed her charitable act.

"Swithin Glastonbury!" echoed I, in no small mystification.

"Yes, the reverend. He called to-day with Sir Morton. Happened to be in town for a few hours. Why, surely I told you."

"No."

"Dear! dear! where was my head? I was quite charmed to see him again."

"Had you seen him before?"

"Oh, dear, yes. Directly he heard of your illness, he called—all the way from St. Grimwold's—to make his inquiries. High church, isn't he?"

"Very."

"He seems quite a well-bred, intelligent person, though?"

"Very much so."

"Personable, too, if it wasn't for that preposterous hat. What does he wear that for? Why, it's as big as Noah's, out of a sixpenny ark. It doesn't become him at all. You ought to tell him so, if you're—any friend of his."

"I wouldn't presume."

"Oh, I'm convinced he'd take it in good part from you."

"But, supposing I like it," I smiled.

"That's absurd. You can't, and you don't," she said, conclusively. "And if——"

"My dear Miss Cleveland," interrupted I, rather ruffled by her pertinacity, "I really can't see how Mr. Glastonbury's head-gear can affect me."

"But it might do so, very seriously one of these days."

"Really——"

"My dear child, I'm no meddlesome

Matty! and I'll say no more, but—I've told you before—I must be allowed to think what I think."

"I should be blind to misapprehend you," I said, loftily, "but, I assure you, you are entirely mistaken. There's nothing of that sort. Mr. Glastonbury is a celibate."

"A what?"

"A celibate. A clergyman who doesn't think it proper to marry."

"Not proper! Good gracious, what next? Not proper to do what his grandfathers and grandmothers did before him!"

"You don't understand, dear. I mean, he doesn't wish."

"Stuff!"

"But I assure you there are such."

"Well, I have heard something of the kind before; but—nonsense, my dear, I don't believe it."

"I assure you," reiterated I.

"Well—poor creatures—if you say so, I suppose there are. But, if Mr. Glastonbury's one, then what does the man come here for, with those eyes that ask a dozen questions about you before he's opened his lips?"

"But——"

"There! don't excite yourself."

"I should think not. There's nothing to be excited about, and it's all——"

"Because, if you're not quite up to the mark, James will never let Sir Morton see you to-morrow afternoon; and he's coming on purpose, you know, poor fellow! There! I've done the heel; got into smooth water again, and now I'm going to leave you to get a little siesta. If I'm not here, you can't—I mean, I can't talk, can I?"

And so, gathering up her worsteds, and

with a kiss of her kind lips on my forehead as she passed, Miss Althea went away.

CHAPTER X.

“OU SONT LES NEIGES D'ANTAN ?”

BY the rule of romance, there should, I think, have been a spice of the thrilling and impressive in that meeting again, for the first time, between Sir Morton and myself. Possibly it would have contained some such elements had it not been for Miss Cleveland, who stood, all the while, stern as a turn-key, beside my sofa, and insisted on our conversation confining itself to a mutual “how-d’ye-do, and good-bye, and a look.” And then a stern though smiling nod of dismissal to Sir Morton, ac-

quiesced in, on his part, with due submission, and a half-smiling, half-rueful "a rivederci then, Jeannette."

These precautions, of course so kindly intended, nearly superinduced the very results they were taken to avoid. To see Sir Morton, and not to be able to ask and to tell all, had been a very Tantalus cup to my thirsting and burdened soul, and for some days I fell back into a wretched state of weakness and unrest. Better, I thought then, never to have seen him again, for the sight of him had stirred up such a tumult of the old conflicting thoughts. Better, so far better, that the fever should have brought me death and a merciful oblivion. What right had such unthankful creatures as I to be cumbering God's beautiful world? How was it that never a gleam of gratitude shone upon the wave of vitality surging through my veins

again? and that I only looked back with bitter yearning to that haze of semi-forgetfulness which had wrapped me so long about; that blessed Euthanasia, from which now I must rise up and confront destiny once more. I who would so fain have lain on, and slept away "this life of care."

But it is not to be, and day by day bodily strength and health re-assert their sway, until the invalid trammels relax for good and all; though heaven knows only what strain and effort it costs me to hold in check the mental forces that rack me with their struggle to be straying again. Only, I think, for the sake of him who sits there now—for at last we are together again, and alone, in the moted haze of the yellow spring sunset—only in the hope of lightening by even one hair's breadth the anxiety beclouding his face, which I can see lifted

now and again to glance towards the sofa corner, where I rest luxuriously among my cushions, listlessly turning the pages of a magazine story—for his sake only I challenge volition to its work. For is there not much to say? at least to me it seems there is.

Hitherto, since he came in—that is, nearly half an hour ago now—hardly a word has passed between us, for he has remembered two letters which must be written for that night's post, and begged for materials to write them there, with a little apology for bringing business affairs into my presence. "But I have done such things before, at Cliffe Cottage, haven't I, Jeannette?" he says, with a faint, composed smile, as he dips his pen into the ink.

And then not the ganglion twist of seventh commandment difficulties in the pages before me, but that face bent over Miss

Cleveland's little walnut-wood Davenport in the furthestmost window, is the book I strive to read, and fail as utterly in doing as though the tale it has to tell were inscribed in Chaldaic. Still, for all its inscrutability, it is changed. Always rich in light and shade, the shadows have settled deeper, the light grown more subdued. Noble and sweet always, never in my eyes nobler and sweeter than at this moment. Something of the warm, healthful olive tints have faded out from brow and cheek, leaving them wan and worn; and across the broad forehead the old faint line has deepened, and lines too have gathered about the mouth, as one sees about the lips of those who have long taken unto them pain for a yokefellow. And is that—ay, yes—more than one, many a silver thread catches the sunlight streaming down upon the rich, dark brown hair. But for the beauty

which the dying year took with it, there is to my eyes a grandeur and nobleness far out-rivalling the graces which have fled, and another beauty time can never steal. But changeless in change he is, notwithstanding ; and not I, who flatter myself I can read his every thought, can guess how much or how little regret may be for the days that are gone.

And so, save for the light, swift scratching of his pen over the paper, there is no sound in the great solemn old London drawing-room. It is late February now, and, for all my indifference to the world, I do experience some vague enjoyment of the primroses and violets with their wondrous gold and purples, nestling among their fresh green leaves in the porcelain boxes under the miniature glass houses of the windows. And the warm air is sweet with their pure fragrance, and over all hangs a glamorous

spell that I shrink from breaking. I would so fain live on in this witchery, and leave the past where it lies. But this cannot be.

"Sir Morton!" I say, in sudden desperation, when I have watched the second of those two missives duly signed, sealed, and despatched. "Sir Morton!"

"Jeannette," he replies, pushing together his writing paraphernalia, and crossing to a low chair beside my couch. "Why, think," he adds, with a little smile, as he seats himself there, "how the tables are turned! There was a time, do you remember, not so long ago,"—and for an instant I fancy his voice falters, but quickly recovers itself—"when it was I who lay invalided upon a sofa, and some one I know sat—as I do now. You remember?"

Do I not? But I only nod my head, and say:

"You can never know how grateful I am for all this kindness."

"Hush ! Nonsense, child," he says, deprecatingly, as Sir James has done before him. "One would imagine that that somebody I spoke of just now had never passed the sleepless small hours, night after night, to attend on my sick fads and fancies. It gratitude has to be talked of, it lies to my score. Come, don't cry now, Jeannette—dear child !" he continues, lifting my handkerchief, and brushing away a tear or two which all the wretched little stock of common sense at my command cannot keep within bounds. "There, that's right, quite some of the old blush-roses again ! I shall be having Althea down upon me, if I let you cry, and there's nothing in the world to be miserable about."

Then he gets up rather abruptly, and,

going to the most distant window again, stares out into the street.

“What a dismal tune that Old Hundredth is!” he says, at last, flinging down a coin to a perpetrator thereof on the pavement below.

“Sir Morton!” I reiterate, desperately returning to the attack, as the appalling sounds die in distance.

“Miss Jeannette!” he replies, facing about.

“Don’t twit me with that—now,” I say, querulously. “It might have been well enough when—when things were different, and——”

“You were to have been my little sister?”

I acquiesce silently.

“I see. But now,” he continues, with a vexed laugh, “you withdraw the privilege; and the breach is to be widened still further. It shall be as you desire, Miss Latour,” he

adds, with real coldness. "Of course I should remember I am nothing to you now."

"You are very cruel," I moan, out of the sting of his words. "And it is, then, really true—that—Lina——"

He starts once more from the seat he has thrown himself upon, and begins to pace the long room.

"Do you forget," I went on, "that everything is a blank to me since—that dreadful day? and that I do not even know—am not sure——"

"Poor child!" he says, halting in his walk, and compassionately regarding me. "What a selfish animal I am! I did forget, indeed. But you must forgive me. It is so hard to conceive that the days which have been a hell upon earth for me have been ones of utter unconsciousness for you."

"And it is all over between you?"

"Yes, Jeannette," he answers, in calm, echoless tones.

"And she is really gone!" I cry. "Oh! what could her cold, cruel heart be made of——"

"Hush! No, no, child," he interrupts; "it is not as you think. I tell you no. She does not know how ill you have been. That I took care should be kept from her. I think I know you, Jeannette, and I believed you would have wished this to be so. Was I wrong?"

"No—for her sake——" I began.

"I did it for yours. To have let her know the truth would have been to have brought her back to you. And the sight of her—her who had caused you so much suffering—might—Sir James warned me of it—might have been fatal to you."

"And supposing it had?" I rejoin; "there would not have been very much harm done.

None at all, if it could have given her back to you."

"It could not have done that," he said.

"How can you tell?"

"Because—do you not know that since she parted from me, in that strange way, in your presence——"

"In the Cliffe Cottage drawing-room?"

He nodded.

"I have never seen her."

"But how——"

"Listen. I will—try to make it all clear to you. Let me think. Well, that day you came to find me at the 'Golden Star'——"

"Yes, because——"

"Child, do I not know why you came? and God bless you for it! Well, they told you I should be back at seven o'clock there to dinner; but I was not. I had a great deal of business to get through, and was detained at different places through various

causes, and I made an effort to knock off an immense deal that afternoon, for you know quite well how anxious I was to be back at Havering as quickly as possible. And so ten o'clock had struck before I returned to the hotel. A lady had been there, the porter said, making inquiries for me. If," went on Sir Morton, with a gleam of gaiety, "if I were to repeat to you their summing up of your personnel—for you had left neither card nor name, and I had to ask a description from him—I might make you vain. It is enough that I knew it must have been you; and I needed no second sight to feel sure that something was amiss at Havering—at Cliffe Cottage, for no light thing would have brought you away just then, Jeannette, that I knew well enough; for had not I entrusted her—— Nay, now, do not look at me like that. Do I not know you acted for the best?"

"I tried to do so."

"Tried! It is the same thing. When they said you had signified your intention of returning to the 'Golden Star' at seven o'clock, and had not come, you may imagine my perplexity. Had you gone home again to Havering? or—well, I cannot tell you how I got through that hideous night, for the last night train for St. Grimwold's leaves London at 9.30, and there was nothing for it but to wait till morning. When at last I found myself at St. Grimwold's, I only stayed to ask if anything had been seen of you there the previous day. Oh! yes——"

"Why, of course! I——"

"Wait a bit. Miss Latour, I called you——"

"And that is my name, isn't it, Sir Morton?"

"Wait now. Yes. Yesterday morning, somewhere about mid-day."

"Why, it was only ten o'clock."

“About mid-day, they said, Miss Latour had passed through with luggage.”

“Luggage! My poor little Russia hand-bag!”

“Never staying to ask another question, I posted to Havering, to find that”—he paused abruptly—“Isoline was gone!”

“Gone! Impossible!”

“That is what, in my stupid despair, I said. And I think it could only have been the dazed, wretched faces of poor Tugnutt and his wife which gave me back speech enough to try to draw from them some explanation—if it was to be had. But it was little enough they could tell me.”

“Where were their senses that they——”

“Let her go; you are going to say. That was my natural question, but they knew nothing until she had been gone hours.”

“They ought to have known.”

"Jeannette, you cannot blame them as they blame themselves. Listen ; an hour after you had been gone out, the carrier, it seems, called for Lina's luggage. 'Luggage!' I cried, aghast. 'Ah! yes, Miss Lina was going away for a bit to Germany, or somewhere. I didn't know that, did I?'

" 'Were these two people suddenly seized with their dotage?' I asked myself, Jeannette, restraining my impatience as I might. 'But not until Saturday,' Dolly further explained, and here was only Thursday. 'But had I not then the least idea she was going.' 'By heaven! No, no!' I cried. 'Ah! but Miss Netta knew.' And then, child, some confused glimmerings of the truth dawned upon me. 'Well?' I cried. 'And so, directly almost after the luggage was gone, Miss Lina went too, but

only into Havering somewhere, as they supposed. For she had just popped on her every-day cloak and hat, and would be back hours before Miss Netta could.' 'And Miss Netta?' I demanded, 'was gone to London?' 'Unbeknown to Miss Isoline. Why, yes, and seeing she had spoken of coming straight to me, and nowhere, and no one beside——'

"And then, Jeannette, before she could say more, there was a loud ring, and a telegram, addressed to Miss Latour, was placed in Mrs. Tugnutt's hands. It was no time for niceties, and we tore it open.

*"From Sir James Cleveland, Portland Place,
to Miss Latour, Havering.*

*"Your sister lies at this house, ill—suddenly.
Come at once. No immediate danger.'*

"Your sister. Miss Latour.' You or

Isoline? Which did it mean? And how came you there—either of you? That, of course, I only began to comprehend when, four hours later, I found myself in this house, and was told by Sir James how you, poor child, had been found lying dead—so, for the first instant or two, they thought—upon the doorstep the previous afternoon. And, when at last they brought you out of your faint, the only coherent word they could gather from your poor, parched lips, Jeannette, was my name, which they said you repeated incessantly. In your little travelling-bag they found a visiting-card of yours, and they knew your home was Havering, because—you see, Sir James was my father's nearest and dearest friend, and was quite aware of my old hopes. A telegram to the same effect as the one forwarded to Havering was handed to me when at last I returned, late that evening, to the

'Golden Star,' together with a letter, dated Havering—from her."

"She wrote to you then?"

"Yes; she wrote to me." Then after a long silence, he added, "I cannot show you that letter, Jeannette."

"I cannot expect that you should, Sir Morton."

"Ah! It is not that I mean. If I wished ever so much to do so I could not, for in my first great agony I tore it to shreds. It was brief and concise, assured me of her eternal friendship and—regard, and—all that."

"Oh yes, I know. And all the other cut-and-dried jargon false love finds to break its chains with."

"No, no, not false. Not false, and yet——"

"Well," impatiently interrupted I, "and she accounted for her flight——"

“In four words. ‘It was best so.’ No more. A very little time, a few weeks, or months at latest, would prove that to me, she said. And then in words, double-edged in their cruelty, because of their sweet, gentle eloquence, she implored me by the love I once thought I had for her——”

“Thought?”

“That was the word she used, child—thought I had for her, neither to answer her letter, nor seek from that moment forth to hold the slightest communication with her. For that, she threw herself upon my honour.”

“And you?”

“Fathoms of deep sea lie between us now, Jeannette, and I do not so much as know what spot in Europe holds her; though by the postmarks of the letters from her, which were at first sent to Haver-

ing, and which Mrs. Tugnutt has once or twice asked me to re-address here, I infer that it is some place in Germany."

"Puppendorf, near Dresden."

A slight bow of the head was his sole comment.

"And that was all?"

"All?"

"She said no more, I mean."

"Not quite all," he answered, with a slight hesitation. "Shall I tell you—do you care to know something of what she said besides?"

"Is she not my sister still? though——"

"She asked me then, by the old regardful affection—'regardful affection,' what words, Jeannette,—I had for her, to seek you out, and cherish your friendship as the costliest treasure Heaven ever gave to man. I think I should have dared to beg for that, even if she had not bidden me do it. And

is it mine, Jeannette?" he asked, holding out his hand. "Is it mine?"

"As it has always been," I said, laying my hand in his. "She is a strange girl——"

"And this," he said, as though he desired to dismiss the subject of her, "is a poor shadow of a hand, isn't it. One that has suffered so cruelly for my sake. I would say," he amended, "for her sake. Worth its weight in gold, though that's a wretchedly mean estimate, now it is such a feathery thing," he went on, lightly poisoning it; "and all Sinbad's valley of diamonds into the——" He stopped abruptly; I knew why; and with the tense curiosity of some culprit seeking his yet unspoken verdict in his jury's eyes, or some augur's client waiting his prediction, I watched that sudden, startled, fixed look in the eyes riveted on the diamond ring hanging upon one of the wasted fingers of the hand he had half-

carelessly, half-thoughtfully spread out upon his palm.

"But just as there are women and women, Sir Morton," I said, for the sake, I suppose, of saying something, "there are diamonds and diamonds, and those have no right there, have they?"

"Her ring——"

"Hers once, yours now. Take it, will you?"

"She——?"

"Entrusted it to me for you. Placed it herself where you see it now, and only your hands, she said, were to take it from mine. So take it, Sir Morton, and relieve me of my trust."

"No," he said, making no attempt to obey me. "Let it stay."

"Sir Morton!" I cried, snatching away my hand, and with a burning rush of blood to my face. "You—I—for pity's sake

take it." And I dragged it from my finger.

"You will not have it?" he asked, in slow, measured tones.

"How—can I? Do not ask me."

"But why not?—a trifle like that."

"Lina called it priceless."

"Oh, did she so?" returned he, with a touch of bitterness. "Yet you see how easily she parted with it. And supposing, for such a scrap of a thing, its value in current coin is great, why, the more worthy it ought to be of your acceptance. Or must it suffer the general fate of cast-offs, and be like old gloves and discarded lovers? I thought it might have been something to you, for your sister's sake, and that—"

"But," stammered I, floundering for the first excuse I could devise, "I—I could not wear it."

"Ah!" he said, colouring slightly, "what

a woman's plea! If it cannot serve vanity's turn, why then—where's the use of it?"

"You are unjust, Sir Morton," I said, gazing at it with hungry eyes, but holding it persistently towards him. "You do not understand—you cannot—"

"But I do," he persisted, taking it. "You tell me so plainly, the old gage d'amour can never be our gage d'amitié. Well, perhaps I ought to ask your pardon, and you are right; I should not have asked you. And so next week, Havering is to have you back again, Althea tells me. You won't stay here any longer."

"Won't!" I smiled. "Really, Sir Morton, to hear you talk one would think Petruccio's Katherine was a model of meekness compared with me."

"There is no doubt that you are an appallingly wilful woman. And if you mean to go back on Monday to Cliffe Cottage, then

to Cliffe Cottage you will go. Has your highness any orders to give for your reception? I can be their bearer in that case."

"You are going to Havering?"

"Only till Saturday. I shall be back in time to join the escort that will accompany you and Althea to Victoria. You have invited her for a little return visit, she tells me."

"And she has accepted, which is nice, isn't it?"

"Charming for you both, I should think. She's such a cheerful soul. Who'd imagine she'd ever been crossed in love, as people call it, eh?" and he held out a valedictory hand, with a little sigh. "I am glad she's going with you, seriously though. The place might seem—just a little dull at first for you, all alone."

"I hope Miss Cleveland won't find it wearisome," I said.

"Scamp is a host in himself against ennui. How that renowned animal will wag his tail off with ecstasy at having you again!"

"Poor doggie, perhaps, but—"

"But?" he said, casting a quick, wistful glance at me, as he laid his hand on the door.

"Nothing, Sir Morton—good-bye."

"Au revoir," and he was gone.

But—Où sont les neiges d'antan?

CHAPTER XI.

MY LADY CALLS AT CLIFFE COTTAGE.

AND so I, with my visitor, find myself back in the old home, and in possession of nearly all the old health and strength.

We three, Miss Cleveland, and Scamp, and I, are at least as happy, happier, I daresay, than thousands of our fellow-mortals under the sun ; but our happiness is of a sober sort. Scamp, for example, is by no means the dog he was. My poor old Scampy, you like me very well, don't you, dear ? and Miss Cleveland spoils you to

your great old heart's content; but Miss Althea's legs are not so young as they used to be, and I always was such a fearfully cumbersome imitation of those delightful romps Lina—— Don't now, Scamp, don't prick those fringy ears at the door like that, and then turn your brown eyes; brimful and shining with mournful inquiry, upon mine, because the little mistress does not come. You are always doing that, Scamp, and it breaks my heart.

Sometimes the place is unendurable to me. Only when Sir Morton Havering pays Havering a flying visit—which he does rather frequently, although he has established what he calls his home at the "Golden Star"—Scamp gets the real, good seven or eight-mile run heart and legs of him, delight in. Sooner than treat that dog with lack of due consideration, I think Sir Morton would neglect me.

Have I written it? Well, let it stand, then. Why not? It is but the simple truth. He is very good. So considerate, so unselfish; hardly ever referring to painful by-gones, avoiding the subject—so it seems to me—with scrupulous care. Not that Lina's name is any forbidden word between us—among us, I ought to say, for nobody ever has secrets from Miss Althea. On the contrary, poor thing, everybody about the place seems to make of her a sort of general receptacle for their perplexities, great and small. Even that St. Grimwold's chief of confessors, Swithin Glastonbury, I have detected more than once with his head mysteriously close to her beautiful silver curls, and as hastily withdrawn at the sound of my approaching footsteps.

No, Isoline's name is not a mute word with us; only it is uttered with somewhat bated breath, and, on Sir Morton's part, with a

reverential tenderness, as men speak of their dead.

Thoughtfulness and consideration itself, Sir Morton Havering is to me. There is no luxury Havering Court affords that, by his orders, is not placed at my disposal. A state of things far from being cheerfully acquiesced in by my lady. And very soon I am indebted to this generosity of her nephew's for the honour of a visit from the stern regent of his estate.

"Of course," she says, after a preliminary expression of her joy at my convalescence, chiefly remarkable for its exceeding brevity, and a somewhat more lengthy preamble to the subject on which, she says, she finds it her duty to have a little friendly—but that word comes with a throe—conversation with me—"Of course, I assume, Miss Latour, that I am not speaking to an idiot."

"I believe I can lay claim to as much

sanity as my neighbours, Lady Havering !”

“Yes. I have always heard you spoken of as a person of sense. Consequently I need use no reserve in my observations.”

I bowed.

“I am, I need hardly say, perfectly aware that you cannot afford luxuries of this kind for yourself—grapes, hot-house grapes, for instance, fetching, as they do just now, fourteen shillings and sixpence the pound—and it is, I grant, most kind and generous of Sir Morton to supply you with them.”

“It is indeed.”

“And,” suavely continued her ladyship, “I should be the last, as you may well imagine, to begrudge you the occasional little gratification, though it hampered my cook’s arrangements twice as much as it does. Charity, I hope I need no telling, has its claims upon the highest as well as the humblest ; and in regard to myself, Miss

Latour, I should be insensible not to feel that some compensation, humanly speaking—for of course the hand of Providence is curiously manifest throughout the entire chain of circumstances——”

“I beg your pardon, you were saying——”

“Some compensation, humanly speaking, is due to you for any recent disappointment you cannot but have experienced.”

“Indeed,” I interrupted, “disappointment, Lady Havering, pre-supposes hope.”

“Precisely,” acquiesced she; “and, indirectly—only indirectly,” and in her chilly eyes came a sharp keen glitter, “have you not entertained this? Surely the failure of connecting yourself by marriage—oh! pray do not misapprehend me—the marriage of your sister with a family so far above your own social position.”

“I think you forget,” I began, “who my parents were.”

“Not at all,” blandly returned her ladyship. “I have nothing to say against your mother, a mild, inoffensive person enough—what a misfortune she did not live to train her daughters in her own footsteps—and your father, a professional man of the highest respectability and talent. It was that consideration which led me to employ his orphan daughter in the capacity of instructress to Miss Havering. Little did I dream how I should be rewarded! But do not distress yourself on that score. It is not my habit to trample on those who are down. I was simply alluding to your baffled hopes, and I should wish to make myself thoroughly clear. Do I do so?”

“It would be impossible to misapprehend——”

“Ah! I am rejoiced to see the excellent frame of mind you are enjoying. But a sick-bed does bring such tranquillity, such

clearness of spirit and of mind. You have come to perceive, have you not, what lamentable mistakes these unequal marriages are—how they jar upon our sense of the fit and becoming?”

“I do not see why this question need be discussed.”

“Only the better to point my little word in season—that little hint I consider it simply my duty to give you that these well-meant kindnesses—that they are well meant, and nothing more, nothing more, Miss Latour—of Sir Morton’s——”

“Well, madam?”

“Are making people talk.”

“So shines a good deed in a naughty world, Lady Havering, as Shakespeare——”

“I did not anticipate flippant retorts out of a stage-play from you, Miss Latour—you, from whom the hand of sickness has been hardly lifted as yet. You do not choose to

understand my meaning. Am I too delicate, too forbearing? Very well, I will be plain, then; you shall understand me—do you hear?—you shall. They link Sir Morton's name with yours!"

"After all that has happened," I sighed, "that is no wonder. My sister——"

"Ah! your sister! your sister!" yapped she, like some savage jackal. "Grant me patience! Not her! You!—your name, Jeannette Latour. And they say that all this time you have been playing a double game. And now, now that you are well rid of her, and have the field to yourself—you turn pale. Ah! we know what that means. Oh, ho! I know! I know! Haven't I watched you and your scheming from the first moment he, my nephew, set foot in Havering. Ho! haven't I put it together, piece by piece, young woman! Well, it was an easy puzzle, but the whole

would make such a charming picture, would it not?"

And there was froth upon my lady's lips as she leaned back, exhausted.

"How many times," she went on, when she had recovered her spent breath—"how many times have you contemplated yourself, I wonder, in the character of Lady Havering of Havering Court?"

"Have you said all you have to say?" I asked, glancing towards the door.

"No, I have not. There is something more yet;" and the ugly foam began to seethe again about her anger-distorted lips. "There is something more yet, and you are not going to turn me out of your house as you did that night—oh! I have not forgotten that, Miss Latour—not before you know all I think of you—all the world thinks. I tell you that your continued intimacy with my nephew is tarnishing your

good name. Do you fancy I am exaggerating? If it is not——”

“It will be no fault of yours, I am sure, Lady Havering.”

“I spurn your insinuations,” she answered, with a cold, contemptuous sneer. “What are Sir Morton’s concerns to me? I came here this afternoon to do you a kindness. I did not imagine it would be flung back upon me with vulgar insults. Neither had I any thoughts of my nephew in this matter. Those would be wasted. He must answer at another tribunal for his frailties. Men can always take care of themselves, and shake off their toy whenever they tire of it; and it is almost superfluous, I hope, for me to affirm that I have slight enough fear of his seriously entangling himself a second time with a person of—of your class. He has had his little lesson, you see, when your fair lady sister

took herself off in that very odd way. It was odd, didn't you think so?" she said, craning her neck at me.

"I did indeed. I think so still. Incomprehensible."

"You wish me to believe that you cannot account for that flight of hers. It amazed you so much when you went off to London to keep your little appointment, rendezvous, what not, with your sister's lover. You forgot, my good Miss Latour, that in Havering we all live in glass houses. If you wanted to have kept your journey a secret, you should have been more careful."

"I should have been, had I dreamed of your waiting-woman being astir quite so early, Lady Havering."

A deeper shade of pallor overspread Lady Havering's meagre features and high, narrow forehead ; but she replied, with the utmost composure,

"Mrs. Sharples, do you mean? What had she to do with it, poor thing?"

"She was my travelling companion, that morning, down to St. Grimwold's; and saw me start by the express for London. But that, I have little doubt, you are as entirely aware of as I am. She told you, did she not?"

"I—really—I am not accustomed to discuss with my servants any chance conversation they may have with the persons they may meet."

"But she told you? Did she, or did she not, Lady Havering. How else should you have known, as you say you did know."

She glanced shiftily round the room, as if I had taxed her with some crime, instead of requesting her to answer a simple question.

"To be sure," she said, graciously, almost humbly, "how should I know else, as you say. Of course, it must have been so."

Poor Sharples, she has rather a long tongue. I am constantly having to chide her on that account. It is a most troublesome failing."

"A dangerous one, Lady Haverling."

"It might prove so, I quite agree with you, Miss Latour. But really in this case, as you see, it went in, as people say, at one ear, and out of the other."

"And did she keep her information only for your ears, I wonder. Or did she noise abroad where I had gone, on her way home, and so my sister heard of it?"

"Really," said her ladyship, ingenuously, "there you tax me too far. If you wish, I will inquire of Sharples whether she can call to mind anything about it, and send her down to you——"

"Pray do not give yourself so much trouble."

"It would be no trouble. Or rather, if

she could make you more comfortable——”

“Indeed she would not,” shuddered I.

“The mischief——”

“If there was any,” said my lady, qualifyingly.

“As you say,” bowed I, “if there was any, is done, and past retrieval.”

Her ladyship sighed.

“My sister is gone.”

“Poor thing!” she said, more cheerfully.

“Well, we all have our little trials in this world, Miss Latour; that is the light you must regard it in. These crosses are for our good, if we could only persuade ourselves of it. That was the object of my coming here to-day, if only you could have been patient—to remind you—Well, well, I make my little allowances for you. Illness renders some people so strangely irritable.”

“I——”

“There! Pray do not say another word.

We understand each other so much better than when I came in."

Indeed we did.

"And now I am going. You have talked too much already, you look flushed. If you did not so utterly scorn an old woman's counsel, I should advise you to lie down, and take half an hour's sleep. Ah! pray do not ring. I did not drive here, I am going home on foot. It is my tract day, and I always feel there is a want of delicacy in flaunting one's coach and pair at the door of a humble labourer's cottage. Doesn't it strike you that you would feel that, if—if you had one."

"A cottage?"

"A coach and pair. Tracts, you see—By the way, I will venture to leave this with you;" and, unstrapping the gold clasps of her sealskin bag, she took one from among a bundle of papers, and laid it on

the table. "A most sweet composition, 'Broken Reeds,' from the pen of perhaps the godliest among living saints. This is one of the hundred and twenty-first thousand that have been circulated. I myself have had the privilege of distributing five hundred at least. My mite in spreading the good seed, Miss Latour. Sharples gave away fifty in a quarter of an hour, down at St. Grimwold's last Sunday night, at the door of Mr. Glastonbury's church, as the congregation was going in to matins, or High Celebration, or whatever he calls it. The young gentleman didn't like it, I daresay. Poor, misguided creature! Well, well. When you've perused it, you will see how marvellously effectual it would prove in rousing hearts fainting under their burden of—Pray now, don't ring the bell, calling your little maid away from her cleaning, poor thing, on my account. And you, Miss

Latour, I entreat you not to come to the door. I should never forgive myself, if you were to take cold, or suffer in any way through me. Good morning to you."

Risking that dread possibility to which she alluded, I sped the exit of my departing visitor as promptly as her stately fussiness, and trailing silks and velvets, permitted. Scarcely, however, had she reached the gate when she turned, and retraced her footsteps.

"Dear me! I—h'm—I quite omitted to say, Miss Latour, in regard to the renewal I once contemplated, of Miss Havering's painting lessons, that I do not now consider it desirable."

"I am sure it is not, Lady Havering."

"H'm," coughed she, with an air of considerable relief. "Miss Havering, as you are aware, is—h'm—h'm——"

"Quite so."

"Yes, strangely—impulsive. So curiously apt to overlook the distinction which social—h'm—— In short, she takes fancies to such odd people, and, under the circumstances, the less she sees of you the better—all circumstances taken into consideration. You see the matter with my eyes, I make no doubt."

"I entirely agree with you, Lady Haver-
ing.

"Ah! So grieved to have troubled you again. Pray don't stand in this chilly air,—so treacherous. Good day, once more."

Safe, this time, off the premises! And as the welcome sound of the closing gate reached my ears, I shut the door, and returned to the scene of the past encounter.

Had her ladyship had the best of it? or was it a drawn battle?

CHAPTER XII.

“DEAR SIR MORTON.”

ONLY I remember that I sank down into a chair with a sense of exhaustion, like one who has struggled with some pestilential monster and flung off, but not slain it. Why, when I remembered how wretchedly I had met her slanderous words, I could have torn my laggard tongue out, and yet, on the other hand, surely utter silence should have been the only true weapon to combat such pernicious stuff.

May be; yet, notwithstanding, I was conscious that, had things been otherwise with

me, I should not have sat there enduring her storm of inuendo. I knew that, had not the hidden flame of my love been glowing within me, pure as human nature's weakness allowed it to be, there could have risen up no smoke to mingle with the evil fumes of her suspicions.

Transparent as through glass, strive to hide it as she might, had been the exultation in those pale eyes at the falling through of Lina's engagement, and yet more glaringly obvious still her terrors lest Sir Morton should dream of transferring his affections—whither she would not.

"Oh, my lady," bitterly soliloquized I, "there is little enough dread of what you fear! Sir Morton made his choice long ago; and neither is there any hope of your winning him for Ursula. Years, months even—for I would never stake heavily on a man's constancy, not this one even except-

ed—and the memory of my beautiful sister, for all it is so lustrous now, may grow dimmer, and he may seek again in the garden of fair women for a bride—a wife; but such a dull, hueless weed as your Ursula will never be plucked by him. That disappointment to your ill-judged ambition you will have to bear as others bear crueller pangs. And yet, cruel enough it is, no doubt, and, merciless as you are to me, there is, in the corner of my heart, some sort of pity for you, for is she not your child, this wretched apology of a woman? Flesh of your flesh. And, for all you brazen it bravely, I know some lurking sense tells you that you had better have been barren than borne such ill-begotten fruit.

“Sympathy, my lady, I cannot give you. You have had none to spare me—you whose cunning has wormed from me my secret, how I know not, or scarcely know, and

would twit and torture me with it, if I should let slip the faintest clue for you. But if I am not your match for guile, at least my wits shall do their best, and I will leave you never a loop-hole, never a crack, for your malice to wriggle itself into. And for that wretched distinction you were pleased to draw just now between man's good fame and woman's, it is not so I hold Sir Morton Havering's honour; my knight sans reproche as ever was the blameless king. What sort of love would mine be for him which should let the whisper of my name touch his under other guise than that of friendship, when no thought of me save grateful regard for my poor rendered service has ever passed his mind?

"He shall be warned of this, and at once. How, my woman's tact must devise. It will be a difficult task; and for my heart, the sharpest wound of all which have torn it.

Yet I dare not shrink from it. The question is simply how—how to do it? Best not think too much, perhaps." And I draw a sheet of note-paper and dip my pen into the ink. "Dear Sir Morton." Very good. "Dear Sir Morton." Well begun, the proverb assures, "half done." Exactly. There was a man once, they say, who thought he would write an epic, and earn a bust for himself in Poets' Corner. A magnum opus, it should be, against whose lustre even the Homeric books themselves should fade to insignificance, so he bought a ream of paper, and one dozen boxes of pens, then he locked himself in, spread out his paper, and, flourishing aloft one of his tiny literary weapons, he brought it down on the foolscap's top left corner, and wrote, "Oh!" It looked well, but presently it occurred to him that there was a grand simplicity about the isolated apostrophic vowel which was

infinitely finer, and he scratched out the "h." There imagination failed him. Whether this first great conception over-balanced his brain, the chronicler sayeth not, but that poet never finished his work.

A spirit profound, if tardy, of sympathy with this Parnassian aspirant, whose very name is sunken in oblivion, steals over me now. What a moral his fate points for me, sitting there pen in hand! "Dear Sir Morton." Like that poor wight, I bring my horse to the water. "Dear Sir Morton." Never has the name my fingers love to write shown my caligraphy to better advantage; but, for all my ideas can frame expression of what I have to say, that sheet of note-paper stares me in the face, a tabula rasa. How am I to tell him that henceforth this house must be forbidden to him? —that here, in this very room, where for so many and many a day his footfall has made

such sweet, familiar music—— "Hush, Scamp! what is it, then?" A rush, a succession of hysterical barks and shrieks, and wriggings and sniffings reserved to do honour to one man only, and Sir Morton stands in the open door.

"You here?" I cried, starting to my feet and throwing down my pen in conscious confusion, as if it had been at least a murderous dagger. "I—I thought you were hundreds of miles away. How—could you startle me so?"

"Did I do that?" he said, gently. "Your nerves, then, must need a world of stringing up yet. Or am I so absolutely out of mind, when I am out of sight, as all that? I flatter myself—oh! but were you writing to me, Jeannette? This looks like it?" and he pointed to the addressed envelope which, in one of my throes of cogitation, I had made ready for the reception of the

epistle still in the clouds. "After all, then, I did have a nook in your thoughts, and talk of——"

"Angels," I interrupted, with a nervous laugh, "one sees their wings."

"I was going to appropriate the more popular, but less complimentary rendering."

"Then your simile would not have stretched to my conclusion, Sir Morton," I rejoined, "for it is only the angelical visits, I believe, that are 'few and far between,' as yours are to Havering."

"Why, yes," he said, "they have been so of late; but—you haven't asked me to sit down yet." He interrupted himself, with a twinkle of amusement in his eyes.

"Pray do so, Sir Morton."

"Thanks, Miss Latour," he returned, with assumed frigidity, "I think I will wait until I am surer of my welcome."

"You—you—are very welcome."

"If the heartiness of your salve may be gauged by its intonation, I think I should do best to take my leave at once. But I will be spiteful, and mean to incommode you, as my Italian friends say, with my presence for a little while." And he sat down.

"And now, gentle scribe," he went on, "what might you have been deigning to write to your poor slave? Unfold."

I made no reply.

"Too weighty for viva voce expression? A commission, was it, to Madame Élise, or Howell and James, or—well, I am all attention and willing obedience, Jeannette, for to-morrow I am going up to town again."

"So soon?"

"For a few hours only, or next morning at latest, then I am coming back to Haver-
ing. Upon my honour, I begin to feel myself uncommonly flattered," he went on, with a touch of pique in his tones, "when I

see how your face, which darkened over with Jove's own thunder-clouds as I came in, cleared like an April sky at the bare mention of my taking myself off again. And now that I tell you I am thinking of settling permanently down in my own kraal, your countenance is terrible to look upon."

"How can you talk such nonsense, Sir Morton? As if I were not always glad to see you."

"Truly?"

"Honestly."

"Ah! That is good hearing. And you think then, Havering may have room for you and—me? No answer? You do not think so?" he persisted, with a puzzled half smile.

"You are really coming back to live at Havering Court?"

"I am contemplating that bold step.

But it depends a little on circumstances.
What do you think of the plan?"

"That can hardly be of much importance."

"If I consider it of some," he said, gravely, "I think you might vouchsafe me a plain answer to such a plain question. Tell me, Jeannette, would it be well, do you think, for me to come back and live at Havering Court?"

"Very well."

"And right?"

"Quite right to rule in your own kingdom, surely."

"I should have to depose the regent," he said, speculatively.

In spite of myself I burst into a laugh at the solemnity of his manner.

"Havering would hardly be swimming in tears on that account, I fancy."

"And take to myself a queen," he con-

tinued, in calm, even tones, "if only for the territory's common weal."

"The regent's daughter," I said, stung by his matter-of-fact tones into a striving to emulate them, "might be a fitting alliance."

His face darkened with displeasure.

"Do you think that?"

"Indeed no, for I did think——"

"Well?"

"It is of no consequence, Sir Morton," I said, coldly.

"It is of the greatest."

"I thought, then, that—I wondered—that is—it is so strange to think how soon the absent——"

"You are thinking of Isoline?"

"Yes—are forgotten."

"She is by no means forgotten," he replied, bending down and stroking Scamp's grizzled head. Then, after a silence, which I made no attempt to break, he said, with

an obvious effort to return to common-places, "I hope they send you down those birds and grapes and things regularly?"

"Yes, and many thanks for them, Sir Morton, but——"

"Always a but with you, Jeannette. What is it now?"

"Please don't let any more be sent," blurted I.

"Tired of them?"

"Yes—no. You see——"

"Then give them to some of your sick pensioners, when you've no fancy for them yourself, but don't deny me the pleasure of offering the things to you. It is a pleasure."

"But——"

"But again!"

"But bought too dearly, Sir Morton. It is indeed, if you only knew."

"Ah?!"

"Lady Havering objects."

“By Jove she does!” he cried—“does she? That is rather too much, when there’s enough of everything up there to victual a garrison. It’s time I took up the command, I think. And pray, who has informed you of her ladyship’s objections?” he demanded, with sparkling eyes.

“Her ladyship’s self, not half an hour ago.”

“Jeannette! What has she been saying?”

“I had rather you did not ask me, Sir Morton.”

“I insist.”

“You will not, if you have any regard for me.”

“If! Jeannette! What is the meaning of this?”

“And—you will not come here again, for your sake—for mine, then.”

“Is this your deliberate wish?” he asked, gazing at me with piercing but gentle scru-

tiny. "You cannot look me in the face—you turn away—you are silent. There has been some meddling——"

"Hush, Sir Morton. Let it be as Lady Havering says. It is best—right, perhaps."

"Is that what you were going to write to me, Jeannette?" he asked, glancing towards my desk.

"What I was going to try to explain, because——"

"The ways of women," smiled he, rising and taking his hat, "are past masculine finding out. Come, Scampy, have a walk, old man?—or will that be trampling too heavily on the proprieties too? He's off! That settles the question. What a fine example of striking while the iron's hot that dog is, to be sure! Good-bye—that is, au revoir, Jeannette." And so he went away.

CHAPTER XIII.

DIBBINS' COTTAGE.

THE long promised panels for the baptistery of Swithin Glastonbury's church had received their finishing touches directly I had settled down quietly again at Cliffe Cottage ; and Mr. Glastonbury had finally carried them off, together with Miss Cleveland's promise and mine, of walking down to St. Grimwold's to see the effect of my labours, as soon as the pictures were likely to be set up. On the day following Lady Havering's visit, we sallied forth to keep this appointment ; and arriving at the church

door, found it open, as indeed it always was, in accordance with one of those singular crotchets which its curate in charge with the rest of his advanced brethren have got into their heads, that a church is made to be used.

Just then, however, not a creature was availing himself of the afforded privilege, and only a slight tapping and hammering at the church's western end announced any sort of earthly presence in the dark old aisles. Making our way through the rush chairs which had superseded the tall pews of recent régimes, we reached the little baptistery with its dog-toothed carven stone font, and tessellated floor, strewn now with carpenter's tools and glue-pots, amid which knelt Swithin Glastonbury, absorbed in fixing the panels into their niched compartments; a flood of soft prismatic colour streaming through the painted window

above, down his slight, sable-clad figure, and casting a moted halo round the well-shaped, close-shaven head. Is it the deep red reflection, or the effect of his hard work, that there comes such a flush upon his pale ascetic face, as he rises from his knees at the sight of us, turning down the sleeves of his cassock, and shaking off the accumulated nails and shreds?

"I hope you think I have done justice to your beautiful work, Miss Latour?" he says. "I have tried my best. I was vain enough to think that my amateur carpentering would be preferable to handing it over to our local practitioners, who are a little clumsy sometimes. Do you think they look as they deserve?"

"Far better," I said, with a pardonable thrill of pleasure in my own handiwork.

"Perfect," said Althea. "Why, Mr. Glas-tonbury, what a splendid carpenter you'd

make!" Then, as if her compliment might not seem all she intended it to be, she blushed rather deprecatingly.

"I am proud you think so," he said, reverently. "It was our Master's trade, you know." And gathering up his tools, and sweeping up the odds and ends, he drew back and stood with us to contemplate the distant effect of our joint labours.

"I will walk part of the way back with you, if I may," he said, as we turned to go. "Dibbins' eldest boy is lying ill. The little cottage, you know, along the St. Grimwold's Road, and he's got a fancy to see me."

"That comes into my plans very well," said Althea. "My legs would prefer being carried home, Jeannette, and Mr. Glastonbury can be your escort. There's the omnibus just starting." And, without more ado, she got into it, leaving us to go our way on foot.

St. Cross's lay in the oldest and most unfashionable quarter of the town ; and I was not sorry when we had left the close, narrow streets, with screaming, swarming children behind, and emerged into the quiet open road. We were both silent, I—if I had any thoughts at all—was lazily occupied in speculating how this man beside me, blessed as he was with talent, youth, and competence, should have chosen this obscure and toilsome career. One would have supposed that some brilliant London congregation, or perhaps a cosy country parsonage, all æstheticism and sinecure, would have tempted him from the squalor and poverty in whose midst he had established himself ; and then, stealing a glance at the face of my companion, I felt how grievously any superficial summing up of those delicate, almost feminine features would err from a correct estimate of him. Tender and gentle as his

face was, there were certain lines about the lips and brow which were eloquent of resolve and a fixed aim in life.

Temptation, I thought then, let it come under what guise it might, would have a hard battle ere it could win him, whether the work he had cut out for himself were beset by the romantic perils of a Xavier, or the prosaic disagreeables of a St. Grimwold's cul-de-sac. Had one, I pondered on, desired to paint a Dominic, or Loyola, or even the more pliable stuff of a Savonarola, it would not have been this face, I at least, for my part, would have chosen for my inspiration; but had I been seeking a St. Francis, then, line for line, I think that blending of human tenderness with lofty spiritual resolve in Swithin Glastonbury's face would have served my turn.

Where were his thoughts now, that he was so silent? Upon that sick lamb of his

fold, into whose presence another quarter of an hour would bring him? Perhaps; though indeed sorrow and sickness, and death too, were as much daily occurrences to this physician of the soul as they were to the kind parish doctor who had come to work so heartily hand in hand with him, when he found that the ritualistic parson was not, as he phrased it, "a mere bundle of stoles and chasubles," and so allowed polemics to slink away to their own place.

What was he thinking of now? Nothing more profound perhaps than how pleasant it was to be free of brick walls and noisome whiffs, and to feel the light breath of the wind, sweet with the scent of early summer flowers, as we plodded on to the music of the sunlit river, gurgling among the young rushes, and the chorus of the birds flitting to and fro overhead. And when at last he broke silence, his words spoke to the

possibility of my having rightly guessed the gist of his thoughts, since they expressed some little common-place observation that, after my long mewing up in London, the change to Havering must be very acceptable.

"It is my home, Mr. Glastonbury," I said, stooping as I spoke to pick a cluster of wild heartsease to add to the posy I had gathered by the wayside. "And, even if it were not, still I think I should care very much for Havering. It is very beautiful—don't you think so?"

"I am no more an impartial admirer of it than you are able to be, Miss Latour," replied he; "for, just as one might care for the casket that contains some priceless treasure, I care for Havering. It holds—yourself! and I love you. Well," he went on, when the moments fled, and there was no sound but the river's eternal rushing, and the

gentle sougning of the wind, "you are silent?"

"I—this is so utterly—unexpected," stammered I.

"I suppose it does seem so," he said, passing his hand dreamily across his eyes. "It must seem so to you. To me, who have loved you so long, to whom these months you have been away have been like living death—I thought I must have died, too, when once they told me your life hung on a thread, Jeannette. Ah! but I must call you so once. Do you remember when we first met in the rectory parlour almost two years ago now? There has not been one hour, one act of my life since then that the thought of you has not twined itself about them like a golden thread. As it will to the end. Speak, Jeannette; will you be my wife?"

"I never supposed—thought—" began I,

"a clergyman, you know—a priest——"

"A man, who avails himself of his church's law of liberty. Do you think I should do God's work the worse with you beside me?"

"But you are mistaken in me, Mr. Glastonbury. I am afraid you think me some faultless creature——"

"If I did, I should not be asking what I dare to ask now."

"I am not worthy of this."

"That is a subterfuge," he said, with blunt bitterness. "But—forgive me, you mean it well."

"I meant it from my heart at least," I rejoined; "and if I could give you the answer you say you desire——"

"And you cannot?"

"I cannot. I am bound."

"Beyond all hope?" he began.

"Beyond all hope. Surely—yes."

With hands that trembled strangely, he pushed back the broad hat from his forehead, and turned away in silence.

"Mr. Glastonbury," I said, gently laying my hand on his arm, "this troubles you."

"Naturally," he said, in a low, thick voice, and looking with fixed, almost stern eyes at the hard grey limestone banks on the river's opposite side.

"I am so sorry—so very sorry——"

"For me?"

"For myself more. You will forget this, and find some woman worthier."

"I shall never seek," he said, with a slight shrug.

"So you think now."

"Is this generous of you?" he demanded, turning his eyes reproachfully on my face, "fair, do you think, to test my power of—of loving by a standard meaner than you set up for yourself? A gift is a gift, and

cannot be taken away again, however scorned."

"No, not scorned."

"Unprized, then; but that you cannot understand, you who—you smile."

Did I? Then it must have been as jesters do, who have death at their hearts!

"It was the greatest homage I had to offer," he said, proudly. "God knows what my love for you is. Not more hopeless than it is deep and lasting. Dear—don't fret because of this—what sort of love would mine be for you, if I had the shadow of satisfaction in the fancy that it had brought you even a momentary vexation? Listen. It is I who am to blame, Jeanette—not you. Indeed I looked for no other answer than this one you have given me."

"Then," said I, brushing away the intrusive tears, and staring in perplexity at

the pale, agitated face, "why, for pity's sake, did you pain yourself and me by such a useless——"

"Because—do you know why a drowning man clutches at a straw? Just so much reason there was in it, and no more. You are right, it was madness to dream of setting my pretensions against—others more worthy of you."

"You mistake, if you suppose——"

"No, I do not mistake—I think I do not mistake," he replied, slowly walking on towards the cottage, which stood some half a hundred steps further along the road; then, as we reached the gate, he said,

"We part friends?"

"Indeed yes, if you will let it be so," I replied, holding out my hand in farewell. To do this I had to transfer my wild-flower posy to my left hand, and in the haste, or,

perhaps, the confusion of the moment, the little spray of pansies fell to the ground.

"Mine!" he said, as he stooped and picked them up. "You cannot deny me that."

"Not if I would."

"Good-bye then. You are not afraid to go the rest of the way alone?" he said, glancing towards the dark avenue beyond.

"No," I said, with an involuntary sigh, "I am used to it."

"God bless you then," he said.

And so I plodded on, till I stepped out of the warm sunlight into the chilly shadows of the avenue. Then I ventured to look back. Gone? Long ago, of course. No, still where I had left him, one hand upon the little white wicket's latch, the other shading his eyes from the sun-glare in the direction of the avenue, he stood; but, as I looked, he lifted the latch, and turned in, to

face sorrow and pain beside which—never
a doubt of it—the denial of my poor self to
him would seem curiously insignificant.

CHAPTER XIV.

DOWN BY THE MOAT.

“YOU haven’t admired my forget-me-nots, Jeannette,” says Althea to me next morning, pointing with pride to a mass of turquoise blue, fringed with soft, dull green, in a little Japanese jar on the table.

“Not given viva voce utterance to my admiration, you mean,” I reply. “They’re beauties. Where did you get them? I never knew such fine ones, except on the edge of the Moat—the great house Moat.”

“That’s just where I picked them. I went into the park this morning for my

constitutional, and it's a favourite haunt of mine, as you know, my dear ; that corner of the Moat where the boat-house is, with the old, rusty iron gate, and little winding stone steps down to the water's edge, and that queer hobgoblin-clipped yew-hedge."

"I hope they were the only hobgoblins you saw. Forget-me-not corner, as Isoline and I always call it, is haunted, they say."

"Of course it is," laughs Althea, "everywhere hereabouts is haunted, I think. What superstitious folks you Havering people are ! What with St. Grimwold's wood and——"

"Well. As long as the ghosts didn't trouble you, I don't mind. But, long ago, some Havering or other was drowned just there. Slipped off the steps getting into the boat that's moored to them."

"Well, to tell you the truth, I was a little startled," confesses Miss Althea. "Do you know that odd creature——"

"Ah!" laugh I. "Then you did see something. Well, confess now, Althea; make a clean breast of it."

"I was going to, my dear, last night; only you seemed so preoccupied."

"Oh dear, no."

"Ah, but you were. And I thought my little adventure would keep."

"And what—who was your ghost?"

"Why, that Ursula Havering, peering in the strangest way through the bars of the gate, like a creature in a cage. My dear, do you think she is quite—*compos mentis*?"

"Not over brilliant, at all events. Why? Did she speak to you?"

"I should think she did. And startled me out of my wits, first by flinging an immense stone into the water right under my nose, where I was stooping over to hook a glorious cluster of the little flowers to me with

my parasol handle. Splash ! it went all up in my face, and over my nice bonnet you'd just done up for me so beautifully."

" And ?——"

" 'You naughty, mischievous boy!' cried I, starting up straight, and looking quite thunder-bolts, 'how dare you?' But all my answer was a queer, low laugh that seemed to come from the bank opposite ; and there, as I tell you, with her pale, odd face pressed against the gate-bars like some monkey creature, was Miss Havering. 'My dear,' I said, as mildly and quietly as my fright would let me, 'why did you do that? You frightened me.'

" 'I want to get out,' she whimpered, 'and they've locked the gate. They've no business to do it. Sir Morton would be very angry if he knew. He won't have the gates locked. I want to get out,' she went on. 'I've got something to say.'

“ ‘Why not go round then to the principal gates?’ I said, for you know, Jeannette, it’s as much as I’ve seen her before; far less been introduced, ‘and I’ll walk round and meet you there.’

“ ‘Do you know what you’re talking about?’ she said, gruffly. ‘They’ve locked that too. She ordered it.’

“ ‘My dear Miss Havering,’ remonstrated I, ‘excuse me, whom do you mean?’

“ ‘Vulgar persons would tell you, she’s the cat’s mother! Mother? Mother?’ she said, in a vacant, staring sort of way. ‘Don’t call her that. I don’t like it. She’s unkind. Mothers an’t that. She’s Lady Havering. That’s what I call her; and she keeps me here, locked in. She thinks I’m going to tell, and so I shall.’

“ ‘Tell what, my dear?’ I said.

“ ‘I want to get out! I want to get out!’ she went on; so piteously, Jeannette,

that it went to my heart. 'My dear,' I said, 'I am afraid I can't help you.'

" 'I've got something I must tell her.'

" 'Tell whom?'

" 'Jeannette,' she sobbed, 'Jeannette Latour.' I don't know whether it was her tears or your name, my dear, but I began to feel interested. I do trust I wasn't wrong in listening to her. Do you think I was?"

" No, no. What did you say then?"

" 'I'm Miss Latour's friend, my dear,' I replied, 'and you may trust me with your message, if you like.'

" 'You don't look bad,' she said, as if she'd put on her considering cap.

" 'No, I don't think I'm bad,' I answered.

" 'They are here,' she said, with a knowing jerk of her head backward. 'She is, and so is—Sh—Shar——' "

" Sharples?"

“ Yes. That’s Lady Havering’s maid, isn’t it, Jeannette? That pinch-up-nosed creature? Yes, I thought so. ‘ Well,’ she went on—‘ and they think they’re so clever, and that I don’t know anything about their tricks, but I do ; I listen at her door when she goes to undress her at night, and they think I’m safe asleep in bed, and I hear ever so plain.’

“ ‘ That’s wrong, my dear, very mean and deceitful. The Bible forbids all that sort of thing, and——’

“ ‘ They’re always reading the Bible,’ she said, ‘ and they do it. And I shall do it too, if they want to harm Miss Latour. And I shall tell of them, and if you won’t listen——’

“ ‘ But I am listening, child,’ I interrupted her. ‘ Why in the world should they be wanting to harm Miss Latour?’

“ ‘ Because they want him to marry me.’

“‘Him, my dear?’

“‘Oh! how stupid you are,’ she said. ‘Sir Morton—my cousin, to be sure!’ and then she burst into a laugh, such a wretched, dreary laugh, Jeannette. ‘But he never will, you know.’—Good heavens! no, I thought. What a mad fancy!—‘And look here, Mrs. What’s-your-name.’

“‘Miss Cleveland, that’s my name, Miss Havering.’

“‘Miss Cleveland, you’re an old maid, then, are you?’ she said. ‘Ah! well, you’re nice for all that, though. She wouldn’t be having you with her, if you weren’t. Look here, Miss Cleveland, they want to keep him—you know whom I mean—from going to Cliffe Cottage. You tell her I say so—that’s my message. You’ve promised, haven’t you?’ she said, eagerly.

“‘Certainly I will tell her, my dear.’ I felt it was best, you know, to humour her. Eh?

Yes, I was sure you'd think so. Wait a bit, that wasn't all she said—not quite all.

“‘You tell Miss Latour,’ she went on, ‘that Lady Havering told Sir Morton this morning’ (so you see, Jeannette, he’s returned) ‘that Mr. Glastonbury had made her an offer—Jeannette Latour an offer, and——’”

“What!” cried I, throwing down my pencil and staring in amazement at Althea.

“Ah! I thought you'd be amazed. Rather premature, wasn't it?” said she, with a faint smile. “‘Well, you poor child,’ thought I to myself—don't be angry with me, Jeannette, I can't help my thoughts, you know—‘there is, at all events, a scrap of method in your madness.’”

“Go on,” gasped I. “Had I accepted him, pray? Yes?”

“My dear Jeannette, don't excite yourself like that. No, you were only thinking about it.”

“Oh!”

“What a queer muddle of facts and fancies the poor creature must have going on in her head, mustn’t she?” said Miss Althea, compassionately. “Can you find any possible clue to it? The idea, you know, of Morton marrying such an unfortunate creature! Our handsome, clever Morton. Eh, Jeannette? Of course, if she’d got some mad fancy for him, one would comprehend it all a little; but she hasn’t—that’s clear. And then Mr. Glastonbury, you know. How, for example, supposing he had—ahem!—supposing he had—how should those two women know? Oh! it’s all clear enough to me,” went on Miss Cleveland, comfortably; “poor Miss Havering, depend upon it, has taken one of those inveterate dislikes people of her calibre of brain do take so often against her mamma’s maid. I can’t say I admire the looks of the

woman myself very much ; but I do strive to steer clear of prejudice always if I can, and one should speak as one finds, and she is certainly civil-spoken enough, and seems to know her place. She said 'Good day to you, ma'am,' quite nicely to me yesterday, when she got into the omnibus."

"Yesterday?"

"Yes. Oh, no, you didn't see her, did you? though she did remark she'd seen us, coming out of St. Cross's, I think she said. She got in after you and Mr. Glastonbury had gone on."

"And you had the pleasure of her company all the way back?"

"No. She got out just at the little cross-way path, that leads down to the lower road. Said she'd walk the rest of the way, it was so pleasant, though for my part I thought it looked hot and dusty enough."

"But about Ursula?"

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consider it my duty, my positive duty, to say yes. He's anything but happy as he is ; one can see that with half an eye. And if I know his face, and I have known it ever since it lay in my arms, the bonniest, sweetest one ever baby had, looking up with those eyes—you know them, Jeannette—if I know his face—well, I dislike jumping to conclusions, but we all know there's many a heart 'caught at the rebound.' That wreath is charming, my dear—stands out on the creamy vellum like real flowers ; but where's your wild heartsease you talked of twining in ?—Couldn't you find any ?”

“ I—lost it—on the way home.”

CHAPTER XV.

THE TRAIL OF THE SERPENT.

Nie wollt' ich dein Herze rühren,
 Liebe hab' ich nie erlebt,
 Nur ein stilles Leben führen
 Wollt' ich, wo dein Odem weht.

FROM what hidden corner of my memory comes forth, I wonder, that hopeless, passionate wail as, some hours later, I find myself out beyond the last straggling cottage or two clothing the outskirts of Haver-
 ing along the upper road to St. Grimwold's, and why I should be here is hardly less clear to me. It is true I have an object in coming, for there is a certain byway on the

heath, some distance still ahead, which I have a fancy for exploring, but that would have waited, being hardly of importance sufficient for dragging me out in the burden and heat of the day; but I cannot settle, somehow, to any occupation within doors, and the house has seemed like a prison to me. I want to think out my thoughts, set them in order, under the free air and the sky—ay, and dream out my dreams too.

What stuff, I always wonder, are those good prosy folks made of who maintain that visions only come when night draws his black curtains? For my part, the translucent shimmer of this warm June midday conjures strange far-off, half-forgotten scenes to my imagination, as I trudge slowly along; and the dazzle and glare of the white dusty road, and all the golden bloom of the gorse, weighting the air with its fragrance, fades to the music of that sad quatrain, into a bluish

silvery haze, and I see, tangible seeming, and real,—as some two autumns since I saw it, when my kind old London artist friends took me with them on their little continental holiday,—the broad platz of a quaint old German town, with its gabled roofs, and the still waters of its fountain, bathed in a flood of moonlight. Through the close-drawn muslin draperies of the open windows of a gast-haus opposite the hotel balcony on which I stand streams a glow of yellow light. Some hospital students are keeping high holiday there, and for the last hour I have been listening to their glees and chorales, until at last Heine's love-lorn lied floats out upon the night stillness.

Did the stricken poet, lying on his couch of pain in that dingy Paris flat, dream what echoes at once of agony and consolation those pearls of his own mournful musings would waken as they dropped into other

weary hearts? And if the sad song held me spell-bound then, what wonder that it steals forth now to enthrall me with all its significance? Somewhere or other, I once came upon its poor patch of a paraphrase. Let me think—how did it go?

“Yet to vex thy heart, ah never!
Love I’ve never asked of thee:
Only where thou art, for ever,
There I’d linger silently.”

Yes, but that is as much like its original as glass is like diamonds; and, poor German scholar though I am, my ear yearns for the mystic sweetness. Hush!

“Und die Glieder matt und träge,
Schlepp’ ich fort am Wanderstab,
Bis mein müdes Haupt ich lege,
Ferne in ein kühles Grab.”

“In some cold grave far away.” Sentimental! Ay, a sentiment I must twine into the practical working of my life. Death or

living, physical death or living, that part of my destiny stands recorded upon a page I would hardly look into if I could. That would be a wretchedly inadequate interpretation of the words which whisper such resolves to me, telling me that here in Havering is no longer resting place for me; and that I too must take up my "wander-staff," and go forth into the world alone. Henceforth my native place must be to me a memory only; for does not every hour I stay in it bring chagrin and vexation to those whose existence the shadow of mine crosses? And indeed it is time to be up and stirring, for what right have I to be sunning myself in my home's happiness, while Lina is far away tossing about upon the cold world's waves? And, above all, for his sake,—Sir Morton's sake,—when I am gone, shall I not carry with me the last shred of suspicion and malice, none the

less stinging because of its causelessness, that my lady loves to harry him with ?

Seem as it may, that my flight should appear like yielding her up the victory, this is a case where leaving her the field is the true valour, and lingering, selfish bravado. And as to her triumph, that will be small enough, apart from the satisfaction she will doubtless feel at having broken up the little home. In bending I conquer—for him. And for myself? Why, her ladyship is welcome a million times to her triumph, such a sorry one as it will be, even if it do not prove her ruin, and loosen her hold upon the very treasure she is striving to grip tighter.

But not my presence shall hinder you, Lady Havering, even in seeming. I am going away. The wide world lies before me where to choose—a pilgrim, with maul-stick and pallet for staff and cockleshell.

“ Be silent, my heart, and beat not so sore ;
Is all lost and gone, when love fled evermore ?”

My art shall build me a new treasure-house—something chill and silent perhaps, and haunted with strange, ghostly shadows, but a fair place for all that, away across the sea there. And first I will bend my steps northward, not because I love it best, but because that land's wide borders holds Isoline; and I shall see her again, perchance, as I wander through its length and breadth, seeking a thousand fair scenes for my canvas. Oh! I think adversity and loneliness make art's best nurses. In the old quiet, happy days, ambition slept, but now that love and content are dead, she rises in her grandeur, and speaks to me of the half-neglected gifts that were my birthright by inheritance. Ay! mocks another voice, but all that a woman foregoes, and gladly forgets, for love's sake. For love the

world is well lost, and all that it contains—
But love is not for me, I set it where
its light can never reach me, and wrap me
round with its blessed warmth; though now
and again I shall be able to take it from its
shrine, and worship it from afar, with calm
adoration, in that new home of mine. And
so once more, clear and distinct, rises to
my imagination that old-world town, with
its long shady walks, and lofty church spires,
and stolid-faced, golden-haired, blue-eyed
women; and then the mast-crowded river
flowing between green meadows and dark
pine forests, away to the great tideless sea
beyond. Ah! and what fair pictures to be
made of those tiny village homesteads,
where the great black, thatch-roofed mills
turn their long sails in the wind; and those
vast lakes, with their tree-girt islands
crowned by some ancient fortress of

massive stone, all mirroring down into the clear still water.

Dong ! dong ! Two by the abbey church clock ; and then jing, jangle, jing, jing—jing, jangle, jing—now with headlong rush, now sticking midway, then on again like a row of ball-stricken ninepins, its tower bells strike up the old familiar “Home, sweet home.” Out of tune and harsh, cracked at all events, those carillons may sound to the tourist folks who chance to take up their ease in the “Green Dragon Inn” just below, as generations of beaux and belles and wits have done before them ; but to me they are fraught with memories which are dearer than life, and every note strikes like a knell to my heart, as I think that perhaps even now for the last time I hear them ; for who knows—

So ! already ? And I stand still, for my musings have brought me to the first goal

of my quest. Yes, this must be the path I am in search of; here on the hill's brow, just a thought broader than those one or two other little byways intersecting the common, which have been worn from the upper road down to the scattered riverside cottages. Following their zig-zags and windings amid the furze, they will bring you to steep narrow gullies in the limestone rock, half hidden by the ferns and overhanging verdure, which, as you descend, you will have to clutch at, to keep your perpendicular, until, sliding and stumbling, you find yourself landed in some cabbage garden, whose tiny path still inclines downward to the water-butt beside the red-tiled threshold of the domicile's back door, through which, if it be summer-time, and the front porch open, you will see the river hurrying and sparkling beyond.

And this is unquestionably the path which

figured in Althea's relation of her yesterday's adventures. I know it not merely from its greater width, but because it continues to track, on the road's opposite side, away to the gate of an isolated farm-house, forming a sort of cross-roads. I am not, however, at all so certain whether my supposition is correct, that on the cliff side it leads to Dibbins' cottage, and, veering off from the high road, I pursue the track through the bushes until I find myself in a narrow pass, whose rugged bluffs, nearly touching above my head, are so luxuriantly fringed with long pendent grasses and hart's-tongue ferns, that the sunrays only pierce here and there, leaving the rest in deep shadow. A pleasant refuge from a summer day's heat, I think to myself, as I gather my skirts closer about me for fear they should brush too roughly the harebells starring the mossy sward, and so, in a few seconds, I find the

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little gorge widening out into a fair dell, amid whose thickly growing trees gleam the white walls of Dibbins' cottage, distinguishable from the others along the under-cliff by its thatched roof and old stone chimney-stack, and also because it is the last before the long avenue. Fair confirmation all these local details, of my suspicions that the inquiring Mrs. Abigail was a witness, hidden somewhere hereabouts yesterday, of that interview between Swithin Glastonbury and me; or at least of our parting, which to her inventive mind was, no doubt, all-sufficing. That she could have heard what we said was hardly possible, since our voices were low; but that again could be of the smallest importance to Abigail Sharples.

One feels a certain satisfaction in making sure of a thing, even if it attain no useful end; and cumulative evidence left me little

enough doubt that my lady's woman, having been privately present at the final act of the little tête-à-tête drama played out yesterday on this spot, had, in all probability, made her way back by the way she had come to Havering Court, there to disgorge all she knew, and more, into her mistress's ear.

Leaning for an instant against a tree-bole, before I descend to the lower road by which I mean to go home, I begin involuntarily to wonder where the woman might have taken up her particular coign of vantage? It is not quite the easy task it seems at first; for the trees are low and spreading, and the undergrowth luxuriant enough for concealment; but few of them afford the commanding point of view she had required, and strolling in and out with a languid curiosity, I try first one spot and then another, until I find I have strayed

back again as far as the mouth of the little pass. Ah! here we are. Admirably focused for a complete view of the side gate, with the smooth plot of grass sloping from it to the edge of the road. Here she must have taken her stand; and assurance grows doubly sure as I track the broken stalks of the wild flowers among the down-trodden grass. The proportions of Mrs. Sharples' foot are, I know, not Cinderella-like, though they can be noiseless and stealthy. What a sunless spot this is, with its weedy tangle sodden to swampiness by dews that evaporate so slowly, and—Hu! yes! a great toad! a huge, black, slimy—No—no such honest a reptile, but a glove, a black cloth, ugly glove, wet and heavy with the ooze of the grass.

With the end of my sunshade, I prod and poke at it, and finally succeed, by a dexterous twist, in turning it over. It falls flat

and corpse-like as some dead hand might, on its back ; and I read on a strip of white tape stitched with excruciating neatness in the inner edge of the wrist, the letters A. S. S.

Who among all my acquaintance can lay claim to those proud initials besides Mrs. Abigail Sharples? And, even had I had any doubt, I think the clawing, clutching twist those empty finger-shapes had assumed,—as apparel, boots, and gloves pre-eminently, does mould itself to the personnel of the wearer,—would have proclaimed the rightful proprietor beyond all manner of question.

“A. S. S. ! I suppose,” soliloquize I, as I hoist the thing perpendicularly on my sunshade’s point, and consider its ugliness at my leisure,—“I suppose she had a second name bestowed on her when she was made a Christian of—whenever that ceremony may have been gone through with in her case ; for I am not Jeannette Latour if this

is not her property. Her lawful property," further I argue with myself, still regarding the relic with the sensation of some unbeliever looking upon a beatified, crumbling toe-bone. "And, being hers, what should be done with it? Why, what but left to clod itself into the earth?"

Certainly I do not feel myself so constrained by the rule of my duty to my neighbour as to carry it home, even at arm's length as I hold it now, and restore it to Mrs. Sharples. Besides, even though I loved this same neighbour of mine as myself, which I do not, I am not at all sure I should be doing as I would be done by. Such a sodden, worthless, worn thing as it is, that the raggedest beggar would not stoop to pick it up. Pah! and I let it slide again to the ground. Unless, shall I confront her with it? No. Cui bono? what use? Why should I vex my vexed spirit

with another thought about this woman, beyond all reach of whose paltry spying I shall soon be far enough? No, let it lie, and rot. It has yielded up its damning evidence, banished my lingering dashes of doubt whether I am justified in my suspicions against Mrs. Abigail; and they will not reproach me when I set foot again in Havering, as perhaps they did when I started.

And so once again I turn to retrace my steps, but have hardly taken two, when a long dense shadow shuts out the glinting sunrays, and the gaunt figure of the subject of my speculations stands before me in the flesh and bone.

Perhaps of the two she is more startled even than I am, but notwithstanding she contrives to take the initiative, and bids me good morning in a tone as smooth as ever, but the keen glitter under the

pink eyelids does not escape me as she adds,

“You’ve chose a sweet spot, miss, for your morning’s walk.”

“Charming,” I reply. “And quite new to me, Mrs. Sharples. It never occurred to me to penetrate this copse before, but you—by the by, your initials are A. S., are they not?”

“As far as they go, they are,” she replies, with dignity. “But if I’m spoke of as I ought to be, A. S. S. is properer. Abigail Sminkinson Sharples is my name.”

“Just so. A double—I mean A. S. S. Then that settles the question; and it is your glove which lies under the tree there.”

Very furtively the half-closed eyes follow the direction of mine, and the half-opened lips essay to speak, but, before they have framed the evasion which I know her cunning brain is hatching, I add :

"You must have dropped it yesterday, when you were here."

"And supposing I was here?" she glares defiantly—"it's a free way, isn't it? I 'ope I know my dooty too well to go introoding of myself where——"

"Where you're not wanted. Let us trust so. But about the glove, Mrs. Sharples—that is where it lies, and if you take my advice, you'll give it a good shaking before you put it on again; for a worm or two may have crept into the fingers, or even an adder coiled up in it, you know. Nasty, crafty, poisonous things! Havering is not so free of them as it ought to be." And then I leave her to pursue her search with the freedom of mind which will doubtless come with complete solitude.

As yet, however, when half unconsciously I turn my head, I see she has not stirred; but still as a piece of hewn stone she stands,

the straight hard lines of her black gown and shawl hanging motionless about her gaunt figure.

Is it possible that I have put about, by so much as a hair's-breadth, the symmetry of Mrs. Sharples' plan of action?

CHAPTER XVI.

“IT IS ALL YOURS.”

BUT what sinful waste to be spending that summer day's loveliness in playing detective on a spy! and incontinently, as I trudged along the road, all thought of Mrs. Abigail Sharples faded from my mind in the sudden bright reflection that now, if ever, was the moment for making a certain little sketch I had long premeditated. My mullum in parvo drawing paraphernalia hung at my side, and I lifted it with all the tenderness with which, for its saving powers' sake, I would have clung to some hand that was dear to me.

Never so profoundly grateful had I ever felt as now, to that gift of mine it subversed—the gift which made life still endurable, stranded and isolated though it had come to be for me. Not the weariest spirit but for the moment must have lent a charmed ear to the spell of that sweet nature-music the birds were chorusing in the sun-gilded oak branches, to the rhythm of the rushing river, and the rising and falling of the gentlest west wind that ever sweetened summer's sultry breath. But afternoon was drawing on apace, and as I descended into St. Grimwold's Wood, where lay my point of vantage for that same sketch, three, striking from the distant church clocks, reached my ear, and if, as well as my poor skill might be able, I desired to perpetuate those lights and shadows, I dared not stay dreaming. Countless times that little spot had been my theme for endless combina-

tions of colour and effect. At dawning and at sunset, under the pale spring tints, flushed with autumn's rich glow, in the full moon's glamour, and faintly silver-tipped by her crescent gleam, in snow and storm, I have stood, with this great flat moss-grown boulder for my table, and sketched this little picture, but never, so it has chanced, as now, in the June afternoontide's glory.

Yet, could Claude's own pencil have been true to it, for all it is so slight a thing? Only a piece of the old monastery tower, flanked by the broken-shafted chapel window, with its terminal tracery standing out clear against the deep, cloudless blue vaulting above the dense, dark foliage beyond, whence peep the thatched roofs of Havering, and one gabled end of the great house, while a silvery thread of the mill weir flashes in the golden light.

To-day, warm contrasting colour and bril-

liancy make the charm of my picture that lies before me, framed by the oak branches which twine in a thousand fair, fantastic embraces above my head.

I stand sorely in need of this picture. I want it against that time which is striding on now. When I am away there in my exile, my eyes will never weary with gazing on it, and when existence and I seem near to parting, then I will take it out, and nourish the poor fainting life with memory. And indeed the picture is so beautiful—the veriest alien would not deny that—but I think it is that grey, gabled end of Haverling Court which makes it a thing of life to me. The little landmark of his home. Oh! love! My love! May your life be sweet to you, and long! May the days that are coming, shine out so bright and fleckless that never one fleeting shadow of the suffering that child has caused you, ever darken

it! She was not worthy of you, my dear! A good enough little girl, my poor Lina, and I forgive her, though indeed I could not, had not your generous soul commanded it of me, and so, for your sake, I do—for yours.

Oh, Lina! Lina! What stuff were you made of that you could do what you did? Why, my poor, foolish child, that base Indian the stricken Moor raved of in his dying frenzy, was wisdom itself compared with you! Richer than the richest queen you were in the possession of that which he had given you. And you threw it away. Heaven forgive you, Lina, and make it good to him, as indeed time must do. Not yet; because I, who can read the inmost heart of him, as he never dreams of, and would die sooner than he should, know how the wound smarts he bears under that calm, brave front. But in time,

child, in time, may your name's very memory be as utterly quenched and extinguished as the flame of the taper the priest dashes to the ground when he calls down curses——Hush ! hush !—Lina, my poor darling, what am I saying? No, it is not anger that is in my soul against you. Only pity, boundless, endlessly wondering pity. Why, to think—— “Sir Morton !”

For he stands beside me.

“Did I startle you, Jeannette?” he says, going on his knees and picking up the pencil which has rolled from my slackened grasp to the ground. “I should be sorry to have done that, if only for fear I chased away the inspiration too. Why, as I caught a glimpse of you through the trees from up above there, you looked a veritable muse.”

“Then it was a Roland for an Oliver, Sir Morton ; for, if you startled me, the apparition

tion of me clearly first startled you," was my brilliant comment.

"Not at all; for I found you just about where I expected you would be. I called at Cliffe Cottage, and Althea said she fancied you had gone St. Grimwold's way, and if I wanted to see you—well, I did; but if I am making a bad third, with you and the invisible genius loci here, I will go away, and come again, as the children say, 'another day.' Shall I?"

"Nonsense, Sir Morton. Another day might be sine die in this case," I replied.

"You are oracular," he said, with a slight, careless lifting of his brows.

"No. It is simply that I am going away—abroad, you know."

"Indeed I did not. How should I? You never breathed a word to me of any such intention, two days ago when we met."

"My plans had not quite taken shape then. And why should I have troubled you with them?"

"Upon my honour, Jeannette," he returned, with some warmth, "you ought to understand by this time that nothing connected with you can be a matter of indifference to me. If I had not first-rate proof how infinitely more charitable your heart is than your words are, I should think you accredited me with being the ungratefulest cur that ever lived."

"You always speak of gratitude," I said.

"Ay, yes, I do," he answered. "Never did man have more reason."

"It was nothing, Sir Morton. What stuff should I have been made of if I had done less than I did, even for a creature I did not care two straws about?"

"Which, by parity of argument," he

said, a faint smile chasing the momentary vexation off his face, "encourages me to think I may be worth as much as three to you."

"You came to be so," I conceded, his own smile reflecting itself in my face at the astounding generosity of my admission. "I think," I went on, pushing my drawing things together in a little chaotic heap—alas! for my picture—"I think it was natural that it should be so, under the circumstances, when you—that is, when my sister——"

"You cared for me for her sake? I grew to be something worth a thought to you, because what she loved——"

"Oh, Sir Morton!"

"You do well," he went on, bitterly, "to set me right. I should have said that what you *thought* she loved could not be altogether uncared for by you. Is that your

meaning?" I was silent. "That is the beginning and end of your regard for me?" he demanded, with calm earnestness.

"No," I said, with a contemptuous laugh. "It was no such false standard. I dared to set up my own true one of you, and I asked neither her leave for it nor anybody's."

"And now?"

"It stands where it stood from the first. I shall carry it with me always. And now, Sir Morton, in case we—we do—not meet again——"

"Jeannette!"

"In case we do not meet again before I go," and unfalteringly now I spoke out the words, as I took my portfolio in one hand, and held out to him the other, grown icy as death, "good-bye."

He took the proffered hand in his own warm grasp, and held it prisoner, coming round and facing me with his two elbows

on the stone, so that, whatever my face had to tell, he could read. Only my eyes should not speak; those at least the veiling lids could hide.

"Good-bye is so easily said," he answered, gently. "Is it possible that true, honest, dear friends—I may say that, Jeannette?—dear friends as we are, your heart can assent to the readiness of that little good-bye of yours?"

"Partings must be," I murmured, chokingly, for my senses seemed all forsaking me. There are some tortures that steal them, and the low sweet tones of his voice were cutting my heart in twain.

"Never was such a philosopher as you." He smiled. "But then it is true, I am going to be alone—uncared for, Jeannette. Just as solitary a hermit as ever that old fellow was when he lived up in the cave there. What drove him to it, I wonder? The

chilliness, perhaps, of that thing some woman he—cared for called her heart. But you, Jeannette, well, you will, of course, make new friends by the dozen—as you ought indeed, child, and the old ones will be all forgotten. You shake your head?”

It was the only answer at my command. My eyes, scalded with hot tears, were looking into the near future, when that blessed moment would be to me only a memory, one that should cherish back the half-freezing life-blood in my veins.

“Oh! but why should you deny it?” he went on. “Your face tells all the story.”

“Story!” flashed I. “I do not understand you. There is no story to tell.”

“Little enough, indeed. That is quite clear,” he replied, releasing my hand, and spreading out his own with a deprecating gesture, and the slight shrug which told

always of his foreign breeding; "and those who fancied there might be so much as the shadow of one were strangely in the wrong, that's all. All? But it is very much, and I ought to beg your pardon, Jeannette. I would do so——"

"Why? For what, Sir Morton?"

"For my egregious blundering and vanity. Perhaps I call it pride; and that somehow, when it has been humbled, always does grow bigger than ever, like the lopped branches. I know it was a poor enough gift I offered her, Jeannette, but it was my best, all my heart's boundless love, and when she——"

"When she spurned it, Heaven forgive her! Threw it back at you. Why will you remind me of her folly?"

"Well, then, I tell you I strove to gather back the poor wasted gift. I might have tried with as much success to gather up the

water spraying down among that clump of fern there."

"Ay, I know," murmured I.

"Only a remnant to be saved. A few drops. Yet those are pure and honest enough. If I could think they seemed to you worth the stooping for, Jeannette," and again his hands sought my trembling ones, and he spoke in low, rapid tones. "It was Lina who said it might be so. That was what she told me in the letter—you remember!—that I said I could not show you that afternoon in the drawing-room at Portland Place. But for those words of hers, believe me, dear child, I would not have presumed to ask this of you—you for whose love I know no man living worthy to dream of asking. And yet, such as I am, I dare to say, will you be my wife, Jeannette?"

Was Paradise suddenly beneath my feet, and before my dazed eyes, that the earthly

loveliness around me broke into unspeakable radiance? For one blessed moment, and then all faded, and I saw nothing but the light of the eyes gazing with such grave sweet wistfulness into mine.

"Can you give me all your love?" he went on. "I ask, you see, so much in exchange for this—affection—that I can give you. All, dear—no less will content me—all your heart's love. You do not turn away. Is it to be mine?"

"It is all yours."

"And this is my wife, then?" he said, as he gathered me slowly and gently to him, and looked down at me with a half sad, half smiling thoughtfulness. "I should be very happy and proud——"

"No, no!" murmured I, out of my own blissful pride.

"Oh! but I am!" he laughed, "immeasurably proud, I can assure you."

Your love is very sacred to me, child," and, with his two hands lifting my face to his, he kissed my forehead once or twice. "So. And now," he said, with an amused twinkle in his eyes, "about this proposed continental sketching trip of yours—when is it to be?"

"Never," replied I, with a happy little frown. "Never now."

"And you imagine," he returned, "that I am going to allow it to be cast in my teeth that I ever thwarted the noble ambition of Jeannette Latour? Shades of my ancestors!" he went on, in mock heroics. "No; those unlimned pictures would haunt me sleeping and waking like beautiful ghosts! No, I say, you are not going to escape so easily. You must make this expedition, only not as the wild free agent you flattered yourself you were going to be, but fettered, Madama, fettered, do you hear, with a person at your side at once your lord and

your humblest slave. And how soon is it to be done?"

"How soon?" faltered I.

"Yes," he said, with a slight, nervous knitting of his brows, "you understand me. Why should any miserable false sentiment delay our marriage? It is better got over as soon as——"

"Really, Sir Morton!"

"I beg your pardon, Jeannette, I ought to pick my words better. That shows what a boor a man's innate selfishness makes of him. I mean, you know, that Havering, and Havering Court especially, is almost unendurable while my aunt rules there, and besides, for your sake,—for mine that is,—there should be as little shilly-shally as possible."

"But only think, Sir Morton, what will Havering say to—to this, and Lady Havering?"

“Hang Havering and her!—with regard to her ladyship, she has always been so prodigal of her comments on our acquaintance, my dear, that the running accompaniment will simply culminate in a crescendo finale, and then let us hope there will be eternal silence. When you are my wife, child, why then,” he added, with a light sigh, “you will be Lady Havering. That is enough. And so, tell me, how long ought that wedding gown reasonably occupy in making?”

“Ah!—if one hurried it unmercifully, two months, perhaps.”

“Two months! Now, Jeannette, I am an ignorant male creature, I know, but you cannot throw quite such palpable dust as that into my mental vision; and if three weeks is not enough to build up a whole trousseau in, an eternity is not. Do you care for me, child?”

Perhaps that I did so well, was why my soul yearned for the sweet dalliance of a longer wooing; but then too, that I did so entirely, made my will his, and I only answered: "You must teach me what is best."

"You are a curious little woman," he said, after he had considered me for a while with a speculative, somewhat puzzled smile. "I could not have credited this, though Althea did say so."

"What did she say?" demanded I, quickly.

"Nothing, my dear, but what another person told me ever so long ago, only I could not believe"—and again a half-stifled sigh escaped him—"believe myself so fortunate."

"As what?" persisted I, but in a lower tone.

"Nothing, dear child. If I say another

word, I shall talk nonsense. Be content.
Come, shall we go home?"

And so, drawing my hand into his arm,
we went up out of the wood together,
promised man and wife.

CHAPTER XVII.

MORE FOREIGN CORRESPONDENCE.

“**D**ID I see Morton Havering bid you good-bye at the gate this afternoon?” asked Miss Cleveland, when we met at tea-time.

I murmured an assent, and Althea nodded, and sipped her tea with a satisfied air.

“I’m glad it’s all settled,” she went on. “There, don’t blush so, my dear. It’s only me, you know, and you needn’t say a word more, if you don’t want. I perfectly understand all about it; and I’m delighted, I can tell you, for both your sakes;” and she rose

and kissed me. "What is to be will be, you see; only I do think it a pity it shouldn't have been first as last, as I didn't scruple to tell Morton when—don't be vexed now, Jeannette; remember what old, old chums we are—when he spoke to me on the subject. Poor boy! you don't know how troubled and perplexed he's been. Just like men, my dear, with their absurd ways of groping in the dark for the blessed light that's actually staring them in the face, or else their conceited moonraking after some affection they haven't the shadow of an excuse for flattering themselves exists—for them. Always extremes, my dear, with the male sex. But when Morton said to me he could not conceive that—that he would be so fortunate as to win your love—he does think so highly of you, you see—there, wait—I only said, I assure you, not a syllable besides, that I didn't know anything about

—well, about your sentiments—how should I, you know?—but I did know that ‘fortune favours the brave.’”

“And what did he say?”

“Nothing. Only got up, tugged at the ends of his moustache, frowned hard, smiled ever so little, sighed—such a sigh, dear! it did my heart good to hear it—and went out. That’s all. And now, I wasn’t mistaken, was I?—I mean, you do care for him, and you—come now, Jeannette, I don’t think one need to blush so very deep for owning to care a little for such a man as Morton Havering. Why, men, women, and children are in love with him. As for me, I’m over head and ears—always was,” concluded Althea, in her placid silvery tones.

“It seems so strange,” I said. “This time last year——”

“Never mind about retrospects,” interrupted she, with a faint catching of her

dismal German school-room, dull-eyed and pale with the weariness of her uncongenial task. Why, have I not some show of reason on my side, if I wonder what stuff we mortals are made of? But reason fails me, and why should I wear my soul out by seeking to wrestle with this Gordian knot no power can undo? Rather it behoves me to turn to that palimpsest where, by her own act of mental suicide, her name is blotted out, and mine stands substituted.

Ah me! if the comparison strikes a discord, as I remember how clear and fair "Isoline" shone out upon the unsullied page, and then think how mine, that has been written in upon the seared and wounded surface, must look so blurred and clumsy! And yet, how far more to the purpose to remember that it is to be my task to strive and atone, with all my own affection's power, for that she gave, and then stole

from him! Is it to be one which I shall never achieve? Ah well, but "never's a long day," the old wives say. Who knows? And then a chill I cannot conquer down, curdles all the warm throbbing of my heart, as I recall the words of his wooing. Thankless, never-to-be-satisfied creature that I am, could words, forsooth, have been kinder, gentler than his? And yet, when he wooed Lina away yonder under the old mulberry-tree, was it in such calm, measured——Nay, now, what right have I to pick his words and ways for him? Why, though they had been formal and circumstantial as any Richardsonian beau's, instead of the few sweet, simple ones they were, they would still have been dearer to me than the most passion-fraught assurance of other lips. That was no vain boast; for, hardly twenty-four hours earlier, barely a quarter of a mile from the spot where we

had plighted our troth, another voice, hoarse with passionate utterance, had said, "I love you, Jeannette!" and, if it had stirred my heart at all, what was it but to pity and regret for the wasting of so rich a gift on me? While that other's offering of a few poor remnants, mere salvage from a costly wreck, I had clutched at, and laid away in my heart of hearts.

Content? Oh! yes, of course I was content. Supremely content. Who is not, when the desire of life is crowned?

As early as next morning Morton Havering suggested my writing to tell Lina of our engagement.

"You might have trusted me to do that," I said, with a suspicion of the surprise and soreness I felt at the strangeness of the sound of the request from his lips. "Of course I shall do so in a day or two."

"To-day, please," he said, authoritatively.

"Oh ! this moment," I replied, starting from my seat, and seizing pen and paper with flurried, angry haste—"This moment, of course, if you wish it."

"I do wish it," he said, in tones whose calmness contrasted strikingly with the impetuosity of mine ; "if you have no special reason, that is, for deferring."

"Oh ! certainly not," interrupted I, with cheeks aflame, in spite of myself. Was it possible that he could be finding some paltry satisfaction in this ? "Only, if there is such pressing hurry for it, would it not have come better from yourself?"

"Perhaps," he replied, still in the same quiet tones, but I saw his lips quiver, and the growing paleness of his face, as he stood in front of my writing-table ; "but you see, Jeannette—— How confoundedly hot it is to-day !" And he abruptly strode out, this hero of mine, leaving me—as the su-

perior sex invariably does, when it can—to grapple with my disagreeable little task as best I might.

Nearly half a quire of the flimsy paper I kept by me for that foreign correspondence of mine, did I waste in the endeavours to clothe my piece of intelligence in decently fitting terms. But I failed miserably; and still, when Morton came back, I was sitting biting my pen's tip, and staring with blank despair into space.

"If your letter is ready," he said, "I might post it for you. I am going into the village."

"Ready?" I cried, starting. "Oh, yes, quite ready. That is, almost, in two minutes, if you can wait."

"As long as you please, dear," he replied, casting a glance at the blank sheet on my blotting pad, and then, seating himself afar off, he lifted the cat on to his knee, and

occupied himself with stroking her ; a process whose delights, to judge by her loud purrings, were always intense ; but to-day these ecstatic expressions were summarily cut short by the completion of my letter, which hardly occupied more than the space of time I had named. For after all it was the simplest of things ; what need, forsooth, for beating about the bush, and for using ceremony with her who had used none ? Oh ! there is nothing in little difficulties of this sort, like taking off your foolish rose-tinted sentimental spectacles, and putting on the very sharpest, commonest-sense ones you may be able to boast of. And so now my letter, guiltless of all circumlocution whatsoever, and simply announcing my betrothal, lay staring me in the face, as three days hence it would be staring in Isoline's.

"It is quite ready," I said, folding it hurriedly. I think, now that it lay there in all its

hard uncompromising black and white, I was anxious to be quit of it.

"I hope I have not hurried you?" he said, starting to his feet in such haste as to render puss's descent to the floor almost ignominious.

"Not at all. Will you read it?" and I held it towards him. He hesitated.

"I had rather you read it," I added, and then he did read.

"Cliffe Cottage, June 18—.

"MY DEAR LINA," (so it ran)—"Yesterday Sir Morton Havering asked me to be his wife. You will no doubt be surprised at this piece of intelligence; but I think your generous heart will not refuse to hope for our welfare as entirely as we both pray for your happiness. Write to me soon, dear child, and believe me

"Ever your loving sister,

"JEANNETTE LATOUR."

"Will it do?" I asked, as he folded it slowly and meditatively, and then returned it to me in silence. "Is it what you meant?"

"It will do, of course," he answered, with a faint smile. "A spade is a spade, isn't it, Jeannette?"

"Lina always understood me," I replied, curtly.

"Quite true," he said, looking thoughtfully down on me. "She can read you with an insight I could hardly have credited, if—Oh yes, my dear, your letter is charming, like yourself."

"Now you are laughing at me," I said, moving away from him, with a pang of vexation at my heart.

"Indeed I am not," he said, drawing me back towards him. "I never am great at sarcasm, and certainly I am in no mood for it now. I uttered a truism of truisms, my

dear, and I tell you your letter is characteristic of the straightforward, gentle-hearted woman you are, only—”

“Always an only,” pouted I.

“Is there? Well, only perhaps, then, it is so incredible that so much romance can be running under all this practical common-sense of yours. So hard to believe.”

“They are not necessarily antagonistic qualities.”

“They won’t always combine well, somehow,” he persisted. “But when they do—oh! Jeannette, my poor child, how is it that you should come to have wasted all the warm, noble heart of you on such a fellow as I am?” and he drew my two hands into his, and looked at me with earnest, searching wistfulness.

“Not wasted—now,” I murmured, blissfully.

“You say right,” he said, and a bright

smile chased nearly all the pained knitting of his brows. "Nothing can be called wasted, can it? that is valued as I value this that you have given me. You do not wish to recall it?—that promise you made me yesterday?"

"I could not if I would."

"Child, I have no right to bind you. See here, Jeannette"—and he pointed to the letter,—“it is not too late yet, if you do not love me——”

"With all my heart and soul I love you."

"Then heaven help and bless you, my dear! Give me the letter." And he went out.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONGRATULATORY.

ONCE more now uprose the old burning question—what would my lady say to her nephew's step? This one could not be less obnoxious to her than the one which had been cut short, and for the second time her barely-veiled designs had been frustrated. That Lady Havering must be furious was a most natural inference; but it failed, notwithstanding, to all appearance; and not a trace of wrath, or even of vexation, rose to the smooth surface of her bearing towards me when she had learned the state of things from Sir Morton.

That deadly silence she had maintained on a previous occasion was all changed now for dulcet congratulation, and almost fawning attention—the women's idiosyncrasies considered. She even vouchsafed to come, with all pomp and circumstance, in her great ugly carriage, and offer me her felicitations, feeling, as she was good enough to say, that her nephew had made such a wise choice.

“That other little affair never did have my approval; as no doubt you felt,” she said, sweetly. “I considered it a deplorable mistake, my dear—I may call you so, may I not? Ah! those tell-tale blushes speak consent,” and her ladyship's preternaturally even teeth glittered with ghastly whiteness between her thin straight lips. “Yes, I always did tell him you were the proper person for him.”

Almost the identical words Althea had

used! Why, then, did they curdle my blood now as utterly as before they had warmed and quickened it?

"You remember," and again the teeth gleamed, "that I told you so to your face—on a certain occasion?"

"I do not remember—" I began.

"You are too modest really," she replied, with a little wave of her long gaunt hand; "but I will not press you. It is not pleasant to reflect on our little wilfulnesses and evil tempers. It makes one—it makes, I mean, of course, those who ever yield to them—look so foolish, does it not, putting the sinfulness out of the question. But do not vex yourself, my dear, I assure you that your hasty words were pardoned by *me* before I laid my head on my pillow that same night. I made every allowance for you. I could see that you were over-excited, hysterical, furious," and the teeth

snapped to with a sharp click—"annoyed, that is, at my having discovered your little secret. What, blushing again!"

I fancy blushing must have been a most strained euphemism for the angry scarlet burning into my face then.

"Ah! really I must say I think you are too thin-skinned," continued my visitor, "over-sensitive. To feel attachment for a person like my nephew, though, indeed, he has his faults—what man has not?—is a credit to any young woman, and shows her discernment. Oh! I think you are very clever, my dear. I admire your cleverness excessively." Was it admiration that the keen glitter of those eyes expressed? I wondered. "Morton is so gifted, is he not?"

"He is—very intellectual," I said, prosaically.

"And then his position, and the rest of

it; but then, of course, these advantages—mere rank and wealth, you know—have small value in your eyes.”

“I value them very highly, Lady Ha-vering,” I replied, bluntly. “If I did not, how should I be worthy to be his wife?”

“I thought,” said she, with a prolonged, plaintive sigh, after she had considered me for several seconds in silence, “I comprehended something of that deplorable lack of unspirituality pervading persons of the Tractarian denomination, but I was not prepared for such a plain—I believe, I fear, I must say bare-faced—avowal of worldly affections. Had Satan in his own absolute personality whispered to me of you the sentiment you have just now uttered, I believe I must have refuted it for calumny. But,” continued my lady, in exquisitely indulgent tones, “I know we must not expect too much of the

young ; it is only years which can wean us from the things of this world, and bring home the truth that we can carry nothing away with us. When," continued her ladyship, fixing her double gold eye-glasses, and pausing to watch with some anxiety the result of a little series of cumbersome capers her sleek pair of greys were indulging in outside—"when we reflect how all earthly substance may slip from us at any moment——"

"The more reason to make much of them while they are ours," I ventured to interrupt, suppressing a yawn at her intolerable platitudes. Her ladyship glared interrogatively at me. "The more reason," explanatorily reiterated I, "to use them well while they are ours."

"Ah ! quite so," assented she, recovering herself.

"One would be ambitious, at all events,"

I added, with as much grace as I could muster, "of rendering up a blameless account."

"Blameless!" ejaculated she, "when we are all such unprofitable servants, such masses of corrupt——"

"And say," I hurried on, flinching with all the old terror from my lady's polemics, "at least, if we are so unprofitable, still we have kept clean hands, and done our neighbour no wrong. When the reckoning day comes, that would be something to the good, at all events, Lady Havering."

But her ladyship only groaned, and expressed her sense of grief and astonishment that such a misleading term as good had been permitted to obtain as it had among persons calling themselves Christians. To her it appeared, indeed, the great central point of all that deplorable doctrine which for the last generation or two had been un-

dermining England's greatness and prosperity among the nations. Something in her jeremiad suggested to me visions of certain gaudily-bound volumes of contemporaneous prophecy that always lay among her worsteds and beads on the table in her sanctum up at the great house, and I offered no comment, trusting that her rush of eloquence, ceasing to be fed by contrary streams, would spend itself. Added to this, there was, as I could see by her incessant glances towards her biped and quadruped creatures outside, her fears lest they should get sunstroke—no unreasonable apprehension this broiling afternoon—or wax restive again; and I had my reward, for very soon Lady Havering rose to go, explaining, as she did so, that her chief object in coming had been to request the pleasure of my company to dinner at Havering Court on the following Tuesday.

"Eight o'clock, my dear, and entirely sans cérémonie," she said. "And of course we hope to see Miss Cleveland. I have the faintest recollection of meeting her long ago."

"Allow me to renew the acquaintance," I said, taking the hand of Althea, who, unaware of the state visit, just then opportunely popped her head in at the door, in search of me, and presenting her to Lady Havering.

Neither pair of eyes could have yielded to the other the palm for keen, silent scrutiny, as, with sinuous grace and suave smiles, the two ladies acknowledged each other; and Lady Havering expressed herself charmed at their meeting, with an empressement—no English word will serve my meaning—an empressement absolutely startling, and that became her much as a gargoyle would suit the apex of Cheop's pyramid. Had

some odd metempsychosis taken place in the natures of those two women, that Althea shrivelled into herself like a sour crab-apple, and my lady expanded like a jelly-fish in the sea ?

“I am charmed,” she said, “to make your acquaintance.”

Althea contented herself with a stiff, responsive inclination of her head. Certainly I argued to myself such a response sufficed, but where had her geniality vanished ?

“Especially at this time,” went on Lady Havering, turning to me. “What an inexpressible comfort Miss Cleveland must be to you, my dear Jeannette, at this trying time,” and my lady sighed.

Althea cast a puzzled look at me.

“Just at the time, I mean,” her ladyship vouchsafed to explain, “when a young person so specially stands in need of a chaperon. Your position is exceptionally unprotected,

is it not? and the world *is* so censorious. What an exquisitely charming provision that was in the old Spanish grandee days, when young unmarried females of any pretensions at all to condition had their—dear! dear! What were they called? How strangely treacherous a thing memory is, to be sure! Those ugly old women, I mean, to look after them? Duennas! Duennas, of course. Do you know, the thought has so often passed my mind, has it yours, what could persons have been like in their youth? Were they all married women, do you suppose, or were some of them disappointed old maids? What do you think, my dear?”

“Really—I never speculated upon the point,” said I. “Perhaps, Lady Havering, the Midshire Archæological Society might be able——”

Something like a shudder shook my lady’s

gaunt frame as she rose, and hastily bowing her adieux, swept to her carriage.

"What made the woman go off in that ridiculous manner, like a certain person in a flash of brimstone?" asked Althea, when the cavalcade was well out of sight.

"She always is a little eccentric," I said, with a smile of self-gratulation.

"Eccentric you call it, do you?" ejaculated Althea, with quivering nostrils. "I'm very glad she's gone, I can tell you. Eccentric! Insulting I suppose you mean."

"You mustn't mind her, dear. If she can get an opportunity of making herself obnoxious she always does, as far as my experience of her goes; but nobody ever minds her."

"I should think not, indeed," said Althea, surreptitiously brushing away a bright drop on her cheek. "It isn't likely I should on my own account. I'm not manufactured of

biscuit china, I hope, but she made my blood boil when—the world censorious, indeed! That's herself is, I suppose—ha! ha! She thinks she is all the world and"—Althea laughed rather hysterically at her own little joke—"and his wife too, that's very clear. As if you wouldn't take care of yourself, you know, Jeannette. You'll have to prove you can, anyhow, if you really mean to go on Tuesday, for I shall not. I mean to have neuralgia. Take bit or sup at her board! No, thank you. Spend an evening under her roof——"

"It isn't hers," contended I. "It's Morton's."

"So it is! So it is!" and the clouds began to disperse rapidly. "And soon it will be yours, won't it? No wonder Morton's in a hurry to be settled. You may treat her poisonous tongue lightly, Jeannette, and say 'barks are worse than bites,'

and all that ;—well, I'm not aware that I'm a particularly good hater, but I don't like your Lady Havering, and I wouldn't trust anything of mine I cared sixpence for near her tender mercies."

"Then you must come," coaxed I, "if it's only to help me look after Morton."

"I suppose I must," smiled she.

CHAPTER XIX.

“A BOND OF FATE.”

IF I look back to that dinner-party at Havering Court with yearning, it is not because the feast was in itself an exhilarating one. With all its faultless appointments,—and clearly Lady Havering, having the fear of Sir Morton before her eyes (for I am not able to accredit her with disinterested motives), had striven her utmost that the entertainment, from a material point of view, should be perfect,—a sense of depression prevailed, as if some unseen ghost sat among us. I do not think it

would be fair to blame Lady Havering for this; for, to do her justice, she strove her best to look agreeable, and this in itself must have cost her a throe, if only on account of the presence of Swithin Glastonbury among the guests.

Her self-control in sight of this red rag unto her susceptibilities was admirable, even when it became evident to her that he was making little more than a pretence of eating, which, whatever might be the cause, she regarded in the light of a direct and practical assertion of opinion on which she was utterly at variance with him. Nevertheless, she contented herself with the significant reminder that it was neither Wednesday nor Friday. The argument appeared to have little weight with the young clergyman—"and possibly," as Althea put it next day in the course of her criticisms on the previous evening's proceedings, "he may have

had his dinner early, you know, Jeannette. At all events, there couldn't have been much amiss with him, for he was quite the most animated at table. Almost over-excited, one would have said ; but then that, no doubt, was because everybody else did sit so mumchance. It's very clear," rattled on Althea, "that I made some queer mistake in fancying he had a sneaking kindness for you, Jeannette. You said it couldn't be, didn't you? Well, all's well that ends well. That would have been too painful; and what a position for you! Bad as Captain Macheath—'How happy could I be with either,'—two such charming men as they are."

"Really, Althea——"

"I am only putting myself in your position," unblushingly continued she, "and I say that if two such swains as Morton and that ritualistic young clergyman had come

‘teazing me together,’ why, really—but, as you say, it was only my fancy, was it?”

“You really do let it run away with you.”

“Well, well,” she said, apologetically—
“what was I saying? Ah! about Morton. What was the matter with him last night? He didn’t look himself a bit. Had a head-ache, had he? No wonder. Miss Havering’s playing was a trial. ‘Spring Dewdrops,’ by Sprinkler! ‘November Mud Splashes!’ I haven’t a particularly fine ear, but it strikes me she plays like a cow. I can tell you I envied you two sly people slipping out there into the moonlight. So did Mr. Glastonbury—if I can read faces. Why, as he stood by the piano, poor fellow, turning that girl’s music-leaves, he seemed to grow paler and paler each instant. I thought what a study he’d make for a painter—‘Early Christian Martyr,’ say. It

must have been so painfully excruciating for him."

Out there in the moonlight! How I can see it all again! Those carven gables and clustered chimneys, standing out clear as day in the full calm flood of light, and all the seamed flags of the terrace, where we paced slowly up and down, catching, like a mirror of polished silver, the grotesque shadows of the old clipped yew-hedges, and the queer rampant stone monsters, grinning above their armorial shields, with one paw pointing down to the deep hewn "Loyal en tout," that gleamed among the summer roses. Only a stray note or two of Ursula's music, to which it must have been the distance that lent enchantment, reached the far-off angle of the terrace, where we paused to look over at the great white lilies on the clear surface of the water below, and then presently as we retraced our steps, and

neared the deep old mullioned open casements of the drawing-room draped with silken folds, through which the yellow lamplight came streaming out upon the silver sheen, there burst forth the grand harmonies of the angelic Triumph chorus from "Faust."

"That is Glastonbury playing," said Morton, with sudden animation, as he drew me by the arm to a rustic seat from which every note was distinctly audible, and then we spoke no word until the last long-drawn chord died into silence.

"It would be worth a king's ransom," he went on, taking a deep breath of content, "to possess his gift. What an enviable fellow he is! One would almost begrudge it him, if he did not make such good use of it! I have heard great musicians in my wanderings, but never man or woman either, save one," and his tone fell into a

low almost reverential cadence, "who could make hands speak what heart felt—seemed to feel, that is," he amended with an abrupt, hard laugh, "for, after all, I suppose one must admit the wretched possibility of the truth of that theory, which maintains that musical expression can exist independently of any heart and soul inspiration. Just a mere mechanical trick. And yet," he went on, in a broken voice, like one in physical pain, "I could have—Hush! Listen, listen! Do you hear that?"

Well, yes, I heard it. Swithin had changed his mood now; and just as it might have done generations back in the old moonlit Wittenberg garden, just as one year ago it did across the glistening lawn at Cliffe Cottage, floated now the low, sweet, passion-fraught melody, "Dammi ancor," upon the silent night. Oh yes, I heard it, but at once I did not recognise it; because

maybe my ear was less apt than his for any music, or perhaps because the growing paleness of his face, and his strange, rapt stillness like one spellbound by some fair sudden vision, as he stood there risen from his seat beside me, and his hold tightening into my arm, startled me too greatly. Only at last, when once again there was no sound besides the lapping of the water among the moat sedges, he stirred, and a tinge of colour came back into his face, as he turned his eyes on mine, and then hurriedly bent down to pick up the heavy shawl of Spanish lace which had slipped from my shoulders to the ground.

"You are cold," he said, as he spread it about, to wrap it round me again; "you shivered, and your face is as white as your dress."

"Why, so is yours," I rejoined, forcing a faint smile.

“I thought——”

“It must be my lady Moon’s fault, or, rather, she to whom all the honour is due ; for really, Jeannette, if you looked charming at dinner, what is the adjective to be applied to you as you look now under this glamour? Shall I tell you that you have absolutely trapped her adamantine ladyship herself into a compliment? ‘Such exquisite taste, Morton,’ she whispered to me just now. And so it is, Jeannette. I am proud of you. What queer stuff it is!” he went on, stroking it absently.

I smiled, and glanced down with loving pride at the thing which had won its sole end and aim in those five monosyllables. Had her ladyship’s criticism on my toilette been as uncomplimentary as it was flattering, and she had been pleased to ask why I had attired myself in a mosquito curtain, it would not have ruffled my equanimity ; but

"I am proud of you,"—my heart throbbed with exultation and pride to think he had said that, and I had my reward for the infinity of precious time I had wasted—I mean, of course, spent—in conspiracy with the forewoman at Milligan's, to render this dress of mine a miracle of art concealed, with its careless folds of creamy muslin, soft and fine enough to have been drawn through that golden ring old fairy stories tell about, and falling in such curves and languorous lines as never costly silks or velvets can emulate. With some audacity, I had fastened in my dark, plain-coiled hair, not a contrasting damask-red rose, but an opening bud of palest yellow.

"Uncommonly queer stuff," he went on. "Almost as intangible and filmy as the yellow moonrays across the boat-house thatch there. Just what Diana's self must have worn when she deigned to tread this lower

planet. Never a touch of colour about you, is there, you pale vision? Do you want to bewitch me with your phantom grace? Why, if this little hand's warm throbbings," and he drew it up closer in his, "did not re-assure me, and perhaps, too, because my poor offering,"—and as he spoke he clasped something about my wrist, and then gently raised it into the moonrays—"bears the goddess's own colours, I should not dare to hang it on this shrine."

Upon my arm, only shaded until now with the falling lace of my sleeve, gleamed a magnificent broad-banded bracelet, set with a large sapphire in a circlet of pearls.

"Your bond of fate," he said, greeting my upward glance from the jewel to his face with a pleased smile, "if, indeed, it has the good fortune to meet your approval—the fetter that marks you for my very

own, if you like it, Jeannette. Do you really?"

"It is magnificent!" I said, watching the play of light in the stone's blue depths.

"But do you like it?" he insisted.

"It is your choice."

"Mine, of course, in so far as your humble servant has had it executed from a rusty bronze original he unearthed once near Athens. Its detail was too heavy for a ring, and, after all, if one chooses to offer one's liege lady an 'engaged bracelet' instead of an engaged ring, there's no heavy penalty attached to the act."

"It's unconventional, that's all," laughed I.

"And therefore fits you the better. Besides, I—to tell you the truth, Jeannette, I fancied you did not care much for rings."

"I don't know why you should have thought that."

"Once you refused me——"

"That was because"—my voice sank—"because—it was a very different thing."

"So it was," he said. "And—I don't know why I should have recalled that. You were right, my dear, and I was wrong—miserably wrong. Come, shall we go in?"

And so out from the moonlight we passed in among the guests, where they sat sipping their coffee and uttering the usual lukewarm post-prandial platitudes. Only Mrs. Cleerstere and Althea were really animated, discussing the weighty question whether three-thread fleecy or Scotch fingering came cheapest in the end, you know, for muffatees, and perhaps also my lady herself was not wanting in the force of her argument against the setting up of a little row of dwarf box-trees over against the western porch of the church.

"It is not to the plants, as plants, that I

object, it would be unreasonable that I should do so," she said, plaintively.

The vicar bowed.

"The nettles, you see, Lady Havering, were getting so ahead of us that, in self-defence, something had to be done."

"It is simply the thin end of the wedge that one has to be guarded against at all points. The enemy,"—and then she cast a glance at Swithin Glastonbury, where he sat with lack-lustre eye, and the gentlest of smiles upon his lips, receiving into his hands Ursula's "drawings," which, one by one, she, in obedience to her mother's command to "amuse Mr. Glastonbury," was producing from a portfolio—"The enemy is so insidious. And Nature and Art are so seductive——"

"Study in red and blue," said Ursula, in the monotone of a cicerone showing off her treasures at sixpence a head, "with bridge in foreground."

"Ah!" said Swithin, adjusting his pince-nez, and bringing the card-board closer up to his handsome but rather near-sighted eyes. "Strikingly vivid! Especially the river here."

"That's not the river at all, that's the sky!" said Ursula, dragging it with not over-much ceremony from his hands, and sticking it into them again, ends reversed. "You'd got it upside down. This is the river. All brown, you know."

So it was. I knew it well—brown as sepia could make it.

"Old houses. St. Grimwold's," she went on, substituting another gigantic sheet of card-board.

"What a nice dog!" said Swithin. "I should think animals will come to be your strong point, if——"

"Dog! There isn't any dog!" said Ursula, with a grim, puzzled frown.

"Oh! yes," faltered he. "Indeed—you must have forgotten. Here, just in front of the door. Here's his tail. Such a curly—"

"That's the pump," said Ursula. "You ought to know the pump, oughtn't he, Jeannette?" she said, appealing to me. "It's the old tumble-down wooden house, along the road from St. Grimwold's to Havering. You know that well enough, I suppose?"

"Ah! what a blind mole I am, Miss Havering! Of course, it is the pump;" and Mr. Glastonbury bent his face till it almost touched the poor presentment of the thing in question. "And a most interesting specimen of early last century work——"

"And that's all," interrupted Ursula, snatching her masterpiece from him, and hurrying it after its companions into the portfolio with an alacrity which left no room for any suspicion that she was proud of her achievements, or courted the shadow

of some hollow compliment; while her own expression of relief was brightly mirrored in Swithin's face, as he turned to reply to some observation of Morton's.

Through the unclear intellect of my quondam pupil, there was not wanting a certain gleam of consciousness of her shortcomings, which endued her with a pathos in my eyes, and redeemed her from utter clod-like inanity, and I fancied she had impressed Swithin Glastonbury with the same sense, which grew tenfold during his good-natured endeavours at appreciativeness of her pencil. "Be pitiful, be courteous," were no hollow watchwords of his creed, but cardinal, innate characteristics of the man, and it seemed to me that the desolate girl—for desolate with all her wealth she was—whose intellectual balance a feather's weight to the wrong might destroy, had inspired him with compassionate interest in her.

Fortunately, too, for Ursula, there seemed to have of late sprung up in her path one or two brighter influences, which, had they risen earlier, might have expanded her nature to some permanent good end, as puny petals will spread under genial sunlight to some degree of healthful life; but the sharp, frosty, artificial rearing had nipped away at the roots too sharply, and left her an odd conglomerate of stupidity and cunning, impervious to the little joys and graces of life that make it endurable for women of her own rank. She was almost past hope now for this; what she was, that she must be to the end of her earthly existence, always provided that it worked even as smoothly as it was now doing.

With her characteristic sharpness of outward perception, my bracelet at once caught her eye.

“He’s just given you that?” she demanded, pointing at it.

I nodded.

"Do you like it?"

"Don't you?" she said, meeting query with query, and gazing at it critically, but with no special light of appreciation in her dull eyes, such as shone with silent eloquence in the faces of Althea and Mrs. Cleresteer, who were signifying their approval with "nods and becks and wreathed smiles."
"What's the blue thing?"

"A sapphire. Isn't it beautiful?"

"And these are pearls, aren't they? Why did he give you pearls?"

"Because," said I, proudly, "they are the loveliest things in all the world—don't you think so?"

"They're well enough to look at, but they mean tears."

"Mean fiddlesticks! Who put such rubbish as that into your head?"

"I had a German governess once," she

went on, imperturbably; "awfully romantic she was—had a poetry album she always carried about with her wherever she went, and was always eating no end of cold herrings chopped up with sugar and onions and apples and vinegar, and she used to say it was horridly unlucky for lovers to give their sweethearts pearl things."

"I should advise you not to let Lady Havering hear you talk such superstitious nonsense. She would be very angry with you, Ursula, and quite right too," I said, turning sharply away.

Notwithstanding, as I unclasped my bracelet that night, and laid it away in its luxurious velvet bed, there stole across me some vague, regretful consciousness that there in durance it must lie till the next festive occasion afforded me legitimate occasion for putting it on again; and, with an involuntary sigh, I thought how gladly I would have

bartered it to him who gave it me, for the poorest, most insignificant little ring that ever village Corydon placed on his Phillis's red finger. That might be with me morning, noon, and night, ever silently cheering me with its reminder of my happy bondage; but by what absurd pretext could I adorn myself with this glittering proclamation of it, excepting upon highest of high days and holidays?

And yet what a monster of ingratitude I was, to be criticising and carping in this fashion at my magnificent gift! Had he not one day said, with that good-humoured cynicism of his, that women only valued a thing according to its capacities for ministering to their vanity? And here was I justifying him and his slander, or seeming to do so. Heaven knows how little room for vanity was in my thoughts then! And yet it was a ring, not a bracelet, that he had

given Lina. A thing she had never been forced to part company from, until—until, indeed, of her own free will she had thrust it from her. Think of it—think of the surrendering back of the magic circle such as, since the world was young, lovers have set upon their ladies' left hand third finger, to guard the nerve that threads thence straight to the heart. For me there had been no such—fanciful conceit, if you will, was it less sweet for that?—but a stately, magnificent fetter, he himself had laughingly called it that. A thing which, made in baser metal, was in form and size for all the world like those bands that bind unwilling captives handfast. Handfast! Not so much as the stirring of a leaf among the clustering ivy about my window, in that warm July night air, and yet I shivered. Handfast! Only a life-long handfasting was this marriage of ours to be?

Oh ! shame ! shame ! to let fancy run riot like this ! Despicable self-torture to conjure such spectral imaginings out of loveliness that should have thrilled me with happiness and pride ! Why, to look on the medal's reverse, and think how that deep, luminous blue symbolized faithfulness and constancy ! Ay, if one must be superstitious as any village girl who cracks apple-pips in the fire to test her sweetheart's troth, at least seek superstition's bright side, and think how the sapphire's pure radiance breathed of what the giver of it was among his fellow-men. The soul of honour and true dealing in things great and trivial alike ; whose word was his bond—"Loyal en tout." And this man it was who had sworn his troth to me, and here I sat woolgathering and sighing because——

Pearls ! And what, forsooth, should their fair gleaming whiteness tell of, except of

the utter pure deep love that is mine for him? What have I to do with the superstitious surroundings of a ponderous German woman, and the parrot-chatter of a half-witted girl? Tears! forsooth! let me read my letter here once again. That shall scatter my vapourings, my letter from Lina, which I found awaiting me just now on my return home, and which I broke open with such chill, trembling fingers, and such unaccountable numbing at my heart; and all so causelessly, for what can be more innocent of heroics, and unsensational, than this reply of hers to that letter I sent about a week ago? Yes, yes, I can read it again calmly.

“No, I am not in the least surprised, my darling Jeannette, at your wonderful piece of intelligence! A little bird whispered to me long ago that it might come to this; and I am so glad, my dear. I know what the worth of such love as yours will be to

him. He will be really and truly happy now. Shall I come and be one of your bridesmaids? or would it be better not? Tell me honestly, dear—as honestly as I tell you that I should like to be one. I am sure the Gräfin would vouchsafe me leave of absence for a whole month if I wanted it. With my whole heart I wish you may both be happy. Will you tell him that I do? God bless you both! Your loving sister,

“ISOLINE.

“P.S.—I cannot see why it should be better not. Kiss Scampy for me, and tell him not to forget me because he’s going to be a grand dog, and live at Havering Court.”

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.



